

## NEWS COLUMN

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### **Food Safety is Vital Part of Summer Grilling**

With summer comes great food and the best part of the menu often comes from your grilling talents. There is nothing like a great tasting T-bone, pork loin, or burger. SDSU Extension Meats Specialist Keith Underwood recently cited the following tips for proper food handling practices.

- Use safe food handling techniques when cooking outdoors, including washing your hands, using clean utensils, and having separate plates for raw and cooked meats. Don't forget to refrigerate portions left over within two hours.
- Thaw meat completely before cooking. Do not thaw at room temperature.
- Marinating meat can both enhance flavor and tenderize. If marinating, do so in the refrigerator, not on the counter. If a portion of the marinade will be used as a sauce, set it aside before putting raw meat into it. If the marinade has been used on raw meat, bring the marinade to a full boil before reusing.
- If you use tongs to move meat on the grill, pick a pair that allow for a solid grip of cooking meat. Do not use a fork because it makes holes in steak and may contaminate the interior of the steak with bacteria from the exterior. Flip steaks and pork chops every 2-3 minutes.
- Measure the temperature of meats with a thermometer inserted into the side of a piece of meat. This will ensure you are measuring the temperature in the middle of the steak, chop, or hamburger.
- Always cook ground beef products to an internal temperature of 160 degrees to ensure safety. Do not rely on appearance to determine doneness of ground meat.
- Using a thermometer takes the guesswork out of cooking. They measure the internal temperature of cooking meat and poultry, and are the only certain way to assure that a safe temperature has been reached. Using a thermometer can reduce mistakes such as overcooking.

A great meat-eating experience is largely dependent on preparation. Since temperature is a key part of grilling, follow these basic internal temperature and appearance guidelines:

Steaks and chops, rare, 135 degrees, bright red center, pink exterior

Steaks and chops, medium rare, 145 degrees, very pink center

Steaks and chops, medium, 155 degrees, light pink center

Steaks and chops, medium well, 165 degrees, no pink in center

Steaks and chops, well done, 170 degrees, brown center

Poultry, 165 degrees, juices should run clear

Ground meat, 160 degrees, uniformly brown throughout

For additional information on safe food handling procedures, contact Underwood at 605-688-5439.

### **Alfalfa Fertilization**

Soil testing is the only way to properly indicate if alfalfa needs to be fertilized. As a rule of thumb, each ton of hay harvested removes over 55 lb. of potassium (K) and 15 lb. of phosphorous (P). If your soils test low and your yield goal is four tons per acre that could mean the requirement of 220 lb. of actual K and 60 lb. of actual P to be applied per acre. Applications are usually best applied after cuttings are harvested in order to negate any crown injury and compaction often associated with early spring conditions.