

FOOD POISONING

By Tom Byrd, NCSU

A food microbiologist at North Carolina State University says a few precautions can prevent a lot of food poisoning across the state this summer and early fall.

"Much food poisoning occurs at picnics," says Mrs. Susan Barefoot of NCSU's Department of Food Science. This is because picnics create ideal conditions for the bacterium staphylococcus aureus, which causes food poisoning.

Many bacteria can cause food poisoning, Mrs. Barefoot said. Staphylococcus is one of the most common culprits because about 40 percent of all people carry the bacteria on their skin.

"The illness is usually short and is often confused with something else," she commented. "People come down with headaches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, and they call it the 24-hour flu. Only severe cases are reported to the health authorities.

Staphylococcus bacteria grow best in moist, high-protein foods, Mrs. Barefoot said. These include meats, poultry, cream fillings, custards and dairy products.

"Prepare picnic foods, especially high-protein foods, under clean conditions," she said. "Scrub your hands. Use clean utensils and containers."

Staphylococcus bacteria are found on human skin, especially in infected cuts or sores. They

usually grow best near body temperature.

To prevent their growth, hold cold foods below 45 degrees and hot foods about 140 degrees. This means storing cold picnic foods

on wet ice and hot foods in insulated containers.

Staphylococcus bacteria need several hours to grow and produce poison. But, Mrs. Barefoot still suggests that you

eat picnic foods as quickly as possible.

"Eat early when you go on a picnic," she suggests "and then enjoy your other activities later — without food poisoning."

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The Polk County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing on the proposed changes to the Polk County Appearance Commission Ordinance on Tuesday, Sept. 2, 1980 at 3 p.m. at the Courthouse. Public comment is invited.