

KanScan

E. Coli infection strikes person in Kansas; state begins investigation

TOPEKA (AP) — The single Kansas case of an E. coli infection associated with the nationwide recall of contaminated beef issued by ConAgra Beef Company is in Finney County, officials said.

Paula Fields, reportable disease nurse with the county's health department, said a case of E. coli was reported in the southwest Kansas county in the last couple of weeks. State health department spokesman

Mike Heideman said Tuesday the agency still is investigating how the person was infected, but said laboratory tests have confirmed the beef was among the 19 million pounds recalled. "We know the genetic strains match,

but in terms of the specific way they came in contact, that is still being investigated," Heideman said. Heideman said state law prohibits the agency from identifying the person. ConAgra has said it will pay medical

costs for E. coli victims sickened by the same bacteria strain as the recalled meat. Dr. Gail Hansen, deputy state epidemiologist with the state health depart-

ment, said the department is looking at three other cases of E. coli in Kansas diagnosed in the last few weeks, but the Finney County case seems to be the only one connected with ConAgra.

Lawmakers seek tax break for drought-ridden farmers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Drought-stricken livestock producers will need tax relief to recover, according to Kansas Republican Sen. Pat Roberts and other Plains lawmakers.

need breathing room, Roberts said Wednesday. Searing temperatures and dry conditions leave little for livestock to eat or drink and prompt producers to sell off what they can.

change the tax code to allow more time to restock, establishing a deadline two years from the end of the drought. In addition, the same tax deferral would apply to livestock sales caused by changes in federal land management policy. And the tax break would apply to the heirs of producers who die before the deadline.

Data Center said. Besides Roberts and Enzi, GOP Sens. Craig Thomas of Wyoming and Chuck Hagel of Nebraska are sponsoring the measure.

Roberts is backing legislation aimed at ranchers and farmers who are selling off cattle and hogs because of a drought that has blanketed much of the United States. Under current law, these producers must replace herds within two years to avoid paying capital gains taxes.

"The last thing producers need is to be forced to either replace their cattle when they cannot, or be burdened with capital gains tax when they are hurting the most," Roberts said Wednesday.

The government said last week severe to extreme drought covers more than one-third of the contiguous states. Warmer than usual temperature and dry conditions spread drought to 36 percent of the 48 contiguous states by the end of June, the National Climatic

But there is no end in sight to the drought that has scorched western rangeland and pastures, and producers

Wyoming Republican Sen. Mike Enzi said. "The drought is forcing our ranchers to sell off their breeding stock and our tax laws are compounding the problem."

Legislation in the Senate would

Shallenburger begins tour on Saturday

TOPEKA (AP) — Republican gubernatorial candidate Tim Shallenburger plans to begin a four-day bus tour Saturday.

Hugoton, Ulysses, Lakin and Deerfield.

Tuesday's stops are set for Louisburg, Lenexa, Lawrence, Oskaloosa, Holton and Topeka.

Shallenburger has scheduled stops in 24 cities, beginning with Dodge City at 10 a.m. Saturday and ending with a rally in Topeka on Tuesday.

He is scheduled to make appearances Sunday in Garden City, Great Bend, Sterling, Hutchinson and Wichita.

In the Aug. 6 GOP primary, Shallenburger, the state treasurer, faces Senate President Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson; Wichita Mayor Bob Knight; and Dan Bloom, a businessman and former Eudora school superintendent.

On Saturday, Shallenburger expects to have stops in Dodge City, Liberal,

Congress sending to Bush compromise bill to boost investor confidence amid scandals

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress moved compromise legislation to crack down on corporate fraud closer to President Bush's desk Thursday, in hopes of easing economic jitters and restoring investor confidence in a battered stock market.

ground, aware that a string of corporate accounting scandals has unnerved investors and the stock market, hitting Americans' retirement savings hard. GOP Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, the

sole dissenter among the House and Senate negotiators, acknowledged that "in the environment that we're in, virtually anything could have passed the Congress."

The House voted, 423-3, to approve the legislation that creates new penalties and jail terms for business fraud and an independent board to oversee accounting firms. The Senate took up the bill soon afterward and passage was a certainty. Bush has indicated he will sign the legislation.

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"Today's message from Congress to CEOs and corporate boardrooms is clear," said House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill.: "If you steal, cheat or commit some other white-collar crime, you'll face the same consequences as law-breaking street thugs by spending time behind bars."

The sweeping changes, which create stiff criminal penalties for corporate fraud and document shredding, are "a major step forward in reforming the operations of our financial market," said Rep. John LaFalce of New York, senior Democrat on the House Financial Services Committee. "It is my hope that this legislation will help to restore the reputation of American business."

Lawmakers in both parties were seeking to restore Americans' shattered confidence in business and the market, mindful that they must face voters in November.

The House vote drew quick praise from Bush. "I look forward to prompt action by the Senate so that I can sign this important legislation into law," Bush said in a statement.

"This legislation will protect investors, crack down on fraud and wrongdoing, and provide tough oversight of the accounting industry. Leaders in Congress heeded the call to put the interest of investors and employees first," the president said.

Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said the agreement will "nail on the wall the clear requirement for corporate accountability."

"I am confident that no CEO will take the risk of certifying falsely. So we are providing the basis for a clean start," O'Neill said in remarks to the National Association of Manufacturers.

News that an agreement was near added momentum to Wall Street's second largest point gain ever Wednesday after nine weeks of punishing losses. The Dow Jones industrials climbed more than 480 points and crossed back over the 8,000 mark.

Also buoying the market were the arrests of the founder of bankrupt Adelphia Communications Corp. and two sons for alleged financial fraud.

Rep. Richard Baker, R-La., said in floor debate that the public is crying out for corporate wrongdoers to be punished. "The American people are not only expecting it, they're demanding it," he said.

House Republicans ended up accepting most of the stricter parts of a bill that the Democratic-controlled Senate passed unanimously last week.

With congressional elections looming in November, Republicans gave

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