For Immediate Release
10/18/12 Update 2 p.m.

The Division of Public Health of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services in collaboration with Local Health Departments is investigating an outbreak of E. coli infection in 81 people who attended the Cleveland County Fair. Preliminary findings suggest animal exposure may be the source of this outbreak.

As of 2 p.m., 52 children* and 29 adults are known to be/have been affected by this outbreak. Eleven individuals* have been or are currently hospitalized.

The county case counts are as follows:
Cleveland County - 48
Gaston County - 11*
Lincoln County – 13
Catawba County – 1
Mecklenburg - 1
Union County – 2
Rutherford - 2
York County, South Carolina – 2
Cherokee County, South Carolina – 1
*this number includes one death related to the outbreak

Note: Case counts during an active investigation may change daily as more information is learned.

The time between exposure to *E. coli* O157 and onset of illness (incubation period) can be as long as 10 days. Now that we have passed 10/17, we do not anticipate many new cases associated with the initial exposure; however, there is still the possibility of secondary cases (person to person transmission) for several weeks. Symptoms of *E. coli* infection may include:

diarrhea or bloody diarrhea, which may be accompanied by abdominal cramps
nausea
vomiting
sometimes low-grade fever

E. coli infection can spread from person to person; however, it can be prevented through frequent hand washing, particularly after using the rest room, after changing diapers, after touching animals and before eating, drinking or preparing food. Anyone experiencing symptoms or illness should contact their doctor or local health department.

Case count updates will be posted daily after 2 p.m. at
http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/ecoli.html