

# Rotten meat for kids

## Why are schools feeding children beef and chicken that wouldn't make the cut at fast-food restaurants?

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Are kids getting unsafe beef and chicken in school cafeterias?  
(Greg Vote/Corbis)

Best opinion: True/Slant, Cato@Liberty, Barf Blog

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A *USA Today* investigation has found that the government provides schools with beef and chicken that wouldn't [meet the safety standards of fast-food restaurants](#). The U.S. Department of Agriculture says the meat it buys for school lunches "meets or exceeds standards in commercial products," but McDonald's, Burger King, and Costco test for bacteria and dangerous pathogens five to 10 times more often than the USDA tests beef made for schools. Is the government being careless about the safety of school lunches? ([Watch a report about schools serving rotten meat](#))

**The USDA needs a wake-up call:** The meat industry has tightened its standards in recent years, says [Patti Hartigan in True/Slant](#), but "the Agricultural Marketing Service, the agency that buys meat for schools, hasn't changed its standards since 2000." That's "unconscionable." The government has to do better, especially since, for many students who qualify for free school lunches, this is "their best — or only — meal of the day."

["Warning: School lunch may be hazardous to health"](#)

**Government never does anything as well as businesses:** See, corporations aren't "handmaids of the devil," says [Neal McCluskey in Cato @ Liberty](#). Their meat standards are higher because they have a huge incentive to avoid "sending their customers to the hospital." The "selfless government," which is supposed to protect the people, gets its money no matter how many kids get E.coli. Makes you wonder

why we've entrusted the government with our children's education.

["Schools and rotten meat"](#)

**The rule: Safe food doesn't make you barf:** People are often surprised when they learn what food is safe and what food isn't, says Kansas State University professor [Doug Powell in Barf Blog](#). "Whole Foods Markets may be trendy and a nice place to shop, but they suck at food safety." But McDonald's, Burger King, Costco, and Walmart have good food safety programs. And that — not a good image — is the trick to serving "food that doesn't make you barf."

["Food safety standards for fast-food far better than for school lunches"](#)