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## Killer genome

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O157:H7 is the unassuming name of a deadly strain of *Escherichia coli* that has been killing thousands of people every year, ever since the first outbreak was caused by contaminated hamburgers in 1982. In the January 25 *Nature* Perna *et al.* describe the sequencing of the entire genome of this killer bug in search of clues to its pathogenesis (*Nature* 2001, **409**:529-533). Comparison with the genome of non-pathogenic laboratory *E. coli* strain K-12 revealed 1,387 new genes, which are organized into distinct strain-specific clusters sprinkled throughout the 4.1 megabases of sequence. Any of these differences may be related to disease-related traits of O157:H7. These results should aid in the development of sensitive diagnostic tools and in pinpointing the killer genes.

## References

1. *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, [<http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/chap15.html>]
2. *Nature*, [<http://www.nature.com/>]
3. The complete genome sequence of *Escherichia coli* K-12.