

WSGW RADIO PRESENTATION

Reusable Grocery Bags

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According to a joint food safety research report issued by researchers at the University of Arizona, reusable grocery bags can serve as a breeding ground for foodborne bacteria and pose a risk to public health.

The objective of this study was to test a hypothesized norovirus transmission pathway via reusable grocery bags (RGBs) within a conventional grocery supermarket. To substitute norovirus a safe surrogate MS2 bacteriophage was used because it is similar in structure to the norovirus.

Method:

Volunteer shoppers were recruited at the grocery store entrances and provide RGBs that were purchased new at the store and contaminated with the MS2. The shoppers agreed to shop for their usual items and a few select items identified for the study. A study team member followed the shopper and swabbed surfaces and items contacted by the shopper.

Results:

The highest concentrations of the MS2 were found on the shopper's hands, the grocery cart, the checkout stand and the clerk's hands. This study suggests that a virus-contaminated RGB presents a public health risk if it is brought into the grocery store. The RGBs are contacted by people, contact many surfaces, and are used to carry a variety of household items in addition to groceries.

Tips for consumers who use RGBs:

- 1. When using RGBs, consumers should be careful to separate raw foods from other food products.**
- 2. Consumers should not use RGBs for other purposes.**
- 3. Consumers should not store RGBs in the trunk of the car because the high temperature promotes the growth of bacteria.**
- 4. Wash the RGBs routinely.**

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Source: Food Safety News
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