

SAFEGUARDS

SGS CONSUMER TESTING SERVICES

FOOD

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EU MEAT TESTING PROPOSED FOR HORSE DNA

Since the detection of horsemeat in beef burgers by Irish food inspectors last month, the scandal has now spread to 13 European countries. Meanwhile retailers have removed frozen beef burgers from their shelves as concern over the contamination and the origin of the horsemeat has escalated. A large number of countries, industry players along the whole food supply chain and a wide variety of convenience food products containing processed beef meat are affected. Products of concern include burger patties, Bolognese sauces, lasagna and other meat filled pasta, meat strips and cottage pies in frozen, canned or even fresh form. Such products have been withdrawn from sale as the product supply lines were found to contain horsemeat.

Unlike recent food safety scandals concerning dioxin, BSE, melamine and dicyandiamide, the detection of horsemeat in convenient food is not considered for now to be a food-safety issue. The problem is rather a fraudulent misuse of the labeling system for economic gain. Misleading the consumer in this way is in contravention of European legislation. Europol will coordinate the criminal investigation resulting from this.

If food-safety is not directly involved, it may well be an indirect issue. The fear is that horses used previously in sports could have entered the food supply chain; meaning that the veterinary drug phenylbutazone, which is used as a sedative for horses not destined for human consumption, could have contaminated some meat products and therefore result in harm to human health. With this possibility, as well as other questions concerning the origins of the horsemeat, this labeling fraud may develop into a food-safety issue.

It is now clear that this is an EU-wide problem needing an EU-wide solution. The Authorities have decided that 2500 tests of processed beef products will be analyzed for horse DNA in March and will be reported in April. 4000 samples of horsemeat will be analyzed for phenylbutazone. This measure could take a further two months. Ministers of Public Health have agreed that the European Commission recommendation on labeling the origin of all processed meat should be accelerated and published as soon as possible.



SGS

SGS has state of the art laboratories in Germany, France, Bulgaria and other countries globally which are equipped and strategically located to provide independent analytical and inspection services. Species detection and identification of species contaminants including pork, beef, horse, duck, turkey and chicken meat can be performed. Food safety analysis related to medication residues and markers (phenylbutazone "bute", anti-coccidials and other potentially harmful veterinary drugs), are performed by our highly qualified experts.

Our network provides supplier audits, product inspection, product sampling as per official methods, mystery shopping and control on sales points to mitigate risks. Our training services, designed to improve hygiene and sanitary risk management related to the specific activities of the food industry (meat industry, ready-made meal production and others), help to implement long term comprehensive food safety systems.

Our certification services FSSC 22000, IFS/BRC and others, confirm system compliance.

SGS is committed to keeping you informed of regulatory news and developments. Leveraging our global network of laboratories and food experts, SGS provides a comprehensive range of food safety and quality solutions including analytical testing, audits, certifications, inspections and technical support. We continually invest in our world class testing capabilities, state-of-the-art technology and expert resources to help you reduce risks, improve food safety and improve quality. For further information please visit our website

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