

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: May 19,2020

Report Number: FR2020-0009

Report Name: COVID-19 clusters identified in French slaughterhouse workers

Country: France

Post: Paris

Report Category: Agriculture in the News, Livestock and Products, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Prepared By: Xavier Audran

Approved By: Kathryn Snipes

Report Highlights:

Clusters of COVID-19 cases have been found in workers at three French slaughterhouses since April. One small pork plant closed while two others kept operating with additional precautions resulting in slightly lower production. No recall was required and there was no impact on national meat consumption or supply.

Several clusters of new COVID-19 cases have been found in workers at three French slaughterhouses.

The first nine cases were found in early April 2020 at a poultry slaughterhouse in Vendée located in western France. After those cases were identified, health authorities tested all 675 workers of the plant. Twenty of the workers tested positive, including one who spent time in critical condition in the ICU and has since recovered. In no case was the disease fatal. The company did not close the slaughterhouse but enforced stringent sanitary measures including lowering its slaughter volume. No further cases have been identified since the initial cluster.

After six workers at the large Kermene slaughterhouse in Brittany tested positive for COVID-19 on May 13, the local health authorities tested all the workers who shared the same cloakrooms, work shifts and working rooms. On May 17, more than seventy workers tested positive for COVID. The plant did not suspend operations but lowered the slaughter processing speed and installed physical barriers between operators. Workers are now required to wear masks and protective visors.

Finally, more than fifty cases of COVID-19 were found among operators at the TRADIVAL pork plant near Orléans in central France on May 18. The plant slaughters about 3000 pigs a day. All 400 workers will be tested in the following days. The plant will be closed until at least May 25.

The French Ministry of Agriculture did not order any recall of products from the three plants as the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through the consumption of meat is considered negligible. Consumers have not reacted with decreased demand or any widely reported concerns.

The French media reported the finding of those three clusters and compared it with the situation in the United States. The media focused on the fact that in France, the meat supply has been consistent without breaks in the supply chain unlike in the United States. They also noted that animals are not being culled because of large-scale disruptions in meat processing.

Attachments:

No Attachments.