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Norway

Livestock and Products

E.Coli Bacteria Outbreak in Norway

2006

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Report Highlights:

In Norway, fourteen young children have been infected by the E.coli bacteria since February 2006. Ten of these children have developed acute kidney failure and one child has died from complications. The initial source of infection was identified as ground beef but then narrowed to processed sausage. The current suspect is imported spice.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Unscheduled Report
Stockholm [SW1]
[NO]

Outbreak of E.coli Bacteria in Norway

On March 20, 2006, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA) confirmed that 14 young children have been infected by the E.coli bacteria in Norway since February 2006. Ten of these children have developed acute kidney failure and one child has died from complications.

The NFSA linked the outbreak of E.coli cases to contaminated ground beef. However, so far, intensive testing of suspected products and other possible causes has failed to identify the source of the contamination.

Ground Beef Initial Suspected Source

From the initial background interviews with the infected children's families, the likely source was first believed to be ground beef from the Norwegian meat giant Gilde. The NFSA advised consumers to discard or return food made from ground beef purchased between January 1 and February 24, 2006 regardless of manufacturer.

Tons of ground beef were withdrawn from the market. Thousands of samples of ground beef have been tested in recent weeks -- but no trace of E.coli bacteria has been found.

Focus Then Shifted to Sausage

After more thorough interviews with families, it was concluded that most of the children had eaten sliced sausage (salami) produced by Gilde of Norway under the brands Gilde Birkebeiner Fjellmorr, Gilde Birkebeiner Sognemorr and Gilde Haugpolse.

On March 20, 2006, the NFSA announced that the Gilde Terina plant in Sogndal, where the suspected meat product was processed, was the probable source of the E.coli outbreak. Production has been suspended. Authorities have issued warnings to the public advising them to refrain from eating product produced between December 1, 2005 and March 20, 2006. The suspect sausage meat was sold throughout Norway. The NFSA has notified all producers and retailers of a ban on the sale of the products in question.

New Theory: Imported Spice

This past week there has been a flurry of media reports speculating on whether an imported spice could be the likely source of E.coli. On Wednesday, March 21, the NFSA announced an investigation into the theory that spices or other ingredients used in the production of sausage meat could be a possible source. According to Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK), the spices being tested were delivered to Gilde's Terina subsidiary.

Compensation for Recall?

Reportedly, Norway's meat industry will demand compensation for expenses related to the product recall following NFSA's recommendation to consumers to return or dispose of ground and processed beef products purchased after January 1, 2006.