



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 9/6/2000

GAIN Report #JA0098

## Japan

### Poultry and Products

# VRE Detected in Poultry Products from Thailand 2000

Approved by:

**Casey E. Bean**

**U.S. Embassy**

Prepared by:

Kakuyu Obara

---

**Report Highlights:** The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) recently announced that samples of poultry meat imported from Thailand contained vanomycin-resistant enterococcus (VRE). The ministry detected the VRE during a JFY 1999 survey of imported and domestic samples of poultry and pork products. Given the wide-spread food safety concerns in Japan this summer, the news may dampen imports of poultry meat and prepared poultry meat imports from Thailand, the second largest supplier to Japan, during the fourth quarter of 2000. In turn, China may capture the supply shortfall for poultry broiler meat due to its capacity to supply portion-controlled products like Thailand.

---

Includes PSD changes: No

Includes Trade Matrix: No

Unscheduled Report

Tokyo[JA1], JA

On August 31, Japan's Livestock Daily (*Chikusan Nippo*) reported the results of testing by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) for vanomycin-resistant enterococcus (VRE) in domestic and imported poultry products during JFY 1999. According to the article, VRE was detected in 6 out of 49 Thai broiler samples tested. MHW reportedly contacted Thai government and requested they inspect the slaughtering and processing plants where the contaminated 6 samples allegedly originated.

Two years ago VRE was detected in a small number of poultry meat samples from Thailand, France, and Brazil. In response to MHW's request, Thailand and Brazil banned the use of the antibiotic drug AVP, reported to cause VRE, in 1998. Based on the latest survey results, MHW has requested that the Thai government take strict measures to ensure AVP is not used and conduct monitoring survey on poultry meat and products for exports to Japan.

A summary of MHW's JFY 1999 VRE survey follows.

- poultry and broiler meat samples (190 imported and 60 domestic samples): Thailand 49, China 73, U.S. 45, Brazil 22, France 1.
- pork samples (59 imported and 30 domestic samples): U.S. 18, Korea 14, Denmark 9, Mexico 9, France 6, Netherlands 1, Chile 1, and Australia 1.
- no VRE was detected from domestic pork and chicken or imported pork.

Reaction by the Japanese food industry to the above news, sensitive to consumer concerns on food safety issues, is forecast to lead to a temporary slowdown in imports of Thai broiler meat and prepared broiler products after September 2000. China would be the primary beneficiary of increased import market share. The Japanese industry is expected to increase imports of Chinese products because China has the capacity to supply highly-portioned chicken parts and prepared chicken similar to Thailand.

The Japanese public is extremely sensitive to food safety issues in the wake of the massive food poisoning incident this summer linked to products produced by Japan's top dairy manufacturer. The cause of the contamination was reported to be the use of toxin-contaminated non-fat dry milk produced by a company that manufactures skimmed milk, calcium enriched milk and yogurt products. Subsequently, a series of food product recalls have taken place leading to media coverage and further heightened consumer concerns. Reports of products found not suitable for consumption to local health offices have also increased, even those not due to illness by consuming products (i.e., strange odor and taste, foreign materials, insects in the food etc.).

Thai poultry and broiler meat is extensively used in Japan's HRI/HMR sector. In 1999, Japan imported more than 130,000 MT of poultry meat (mostly broiler meat) from Thailand (see JA0088 Japan Poultry Annual). Although MHW says that VRE will not cause health problems as long the meat is properly cooked, this segment of the trade may be affected due to trade concerns about country of origin.

In Japan's HRI/HMR sector, country of origin labeling is not common and Japanese consumers will likely not even know the source of these chicken products has shifted from one country to another. In the Japanese retail sector, the *yakitori* pack containing a half dozen of ready-to-serve *yakitori* sticks imported from Thailand and China is very popular. About 40,000 MT of prepared Thai poultry meat are imported into Japan last year.

FAS/Japan will begin monitoring monthly import data of poultry and broiler after September since imports of Thai poultry meat may slacken due to safety concerns.