

CFS finds trace amount of antibiotic in egg sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (August 4) that an egg sample from Ukraine was detected to contain a trace amount of metronidazole, an antibiotic. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System, noted a notice issued by the Singapore Food Agency that the import of the above-mentioned product from a farm in Ukraine, Baryshevka, to Singapore is suspended due to the detection of metronidazole above its permissible levels.

"Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately contacted the Ukrainian and Singaporean authorities and major importers for follow-up. The CFS also enhanced its surveillance on eggs from the farm concerned by adopting the hold and test measure, i.e. requiring importers not to sell the eggs concerned until satisfactory test results were available. Preliminary investigation found that a local importer had imported a consignment of eggs from the farm concerned, of which an egg sample collected by CFS for testing showed that it contained metronidazole at a level of 1.1 parts per billion.

"The CFS has notified the importer concerned of the test result. Under the hold and test arrangement, the consignment of the eggs has been held and has not entered into the local market."

The spokesman added, "For the sake of prudence, the CFS has also suspended the import into and sale within Hong Kong of eggs produced in the farm concerned with immediate effect. The trade should also stop using and selling the affected product if they possess any."

According to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, as residues of metronidazole or its metabolites may cause significant health concerns, competent authorities should prevent residues of metronidazole in food.

According to section 52 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, any person who sells to a purchaser any food which is not of the nature, substance or quality demanded by the purchaser shall be guilty of an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment for three months upon conviction.

The CFS has informed the Ukrainian authorities of the import suspension and will also notify the local trade. It will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health. Investigation is ongoing.