

Prepackaged bamboo fungi sample detected with excessive preservative and in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 6) that a sample of prepackaged bamboo fungi was found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative, at a level exceeding the legal limit, and the functional class and name of the additive were not declared on the food label. Members of the public should not consume the affected batch of the product. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batch of the product immediately if they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Dictyophora indusiata/Dried bamboo fungi

Brand: (Not available in English)

Place of origin: China

Packer: (Not available in English)

Net weight: 100 grams per pack

Use-by date: September 23, 2021

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample of bamboo fungi from a shop in Hung Hom for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 6,730 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 500 ppm. The functional class and name of the additive were also not declared on the food label," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularities and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. The importer and supplier concerned has initiated a recall according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call its hotline at 9655 5833 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product," the spokesman added.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. This preservative is of low toxicity. As it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea after consumption.

The spokesman reminded the food trade that the use of preservatives in food must comply with the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD). Furthermore, the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap

132W) require that for all prepackaged food for sale in Hong Kong containing sulphite in a concentration of 10 parts per million or more, the functional class of the sulphite and its name shall be specified in the list of ingredients. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.

90 per cent Guarantee Product of SME Financing Guarantee Scheme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The HKMC Insurance Limited (HKMCI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation Limited, announces that, with the approval of the funding by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council today (December 6), the 90 per cent Guarantee Product under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) will be introduced. The 90 per cent Guarantee Product aims to provide additional support to smaller-sized enterprises, businesses with relatively less operating experience, as well as professionals seeking to set up their own practices, to obtain financing.

A total of HK\$33 billion will be guaranteed by the Government for the 90 per cent Guarantee Product. Each eligible enterprise can obtain guarantee for term loans up to HK\$6 million, with a maximum guarantee period of five years and the same guarantee fee rate as the existing 80 per cent Guarantee Product. The HKMCI is actively undertaking the final preparatory work with the lenders, and strives to start receiving applications before the end of this year. The application period will last until June 30, 2022.

Further announcement will be made upon finalisation of the date of receiving applications. For public enquiries, please call the SFGS Hotline at 2536 0392.

CHP investigates outbreak of acute

gastroenteritis at kindergarten in Fanling

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 6) investigating an outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (AGE) at a kindergarten in Fanling, and hence reminded the public and management of institutions to maintain personal and environmental hygiene against AGE.

The outbreak involves 15 boys and five girls aged 3 to 5 years. They developed vomiting and diarrhoea since November 1. Seventeen of them sought medical attention and none required hospitalisation. Upon laboratory testing, the stool specimen of a child tested positive for adenovirus. All patients are in a stable condition.

Officers of the CHP have conducted a site visit and provided health advice to the staff of the school concerning proper and thorough disinfection, proper disposal of vomitus, and personal and environmental hygiene. The school has been put under medical surveillance.

The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP advised members of the public to take heed of the following preventive measures against gastroenteritis:

- Ensure proper personal hygiene;
- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food and eating, after using the toilet or after changing diapers;
- Wear gloves when disposing of vomitus or faecal matter, and wash hands afterwards;
- Clean and disinfect contaminated areas or items promptly and thoroughly with diluted household bleach (by adding one part of bleach containing 5.25 per cent sodium hypochlorite to 49 parts of water). Wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Pay attention to food hygiene;
- Use separate utensils to handle raw and cooked food;
- Avoid food that is not thoroughly cooked;
- Drink boiled water; and
- Do not patronise unlicensed food premises or food stalls.

The public may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk) or call the Health Education Hotline (2833 0111) for more information.

Update on latest MERS situation in Saudi Arabia

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (December 6) closely monitoring 15 additional cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by Saudi Arabia from October 1 to 31. The CHP again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit.

According to the WHO, of the additional cases, 12 were male patients and three were female patients, with ages from 26 to 94. Among them, three had exposure to camels and consumed camel milk, and two were health care workers who had contact with previously confirmed patients. Twelve had underlying illnesses and six have passed away.

According to the latest information, 2 484 cases have been reported to the WHO (with 857 deaths), including 2 265 in 10 Middle East countries comprising 2 092 in Saudi Arabia, 88 in the United Arab Emirates, 28 in Jordan, 24 in Oman, 19 in Qatar, six in Iran, four in Kuwait, two in Lebanon, and one each in Yemen and Bahrain.

"We will maintain close communication with the WHO and relevant health authorities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"As countries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, continue to report MERS cases from time to time, travellers should refrain from going to farms, barns or markets with camels and avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry. Most of the cases reported in the Middle East had a history of exposure to camels, consumption of camel milk or contact with other MERS patients," the spokesman said.

"Scientific evidence showed that camels are reservoirs for MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Camels infected with MERS-CoV may not show any signs of infection. Infected animals may shed MERS-CoV through nasal and eye discharge and faeces, and potentially in their milk and urine. The virus may also be found in the raw organs and meat of infected animals. Therefore, the best protection is to practise good hygiene and avoid direct contact with all of these," the spokesman added.

From time to time, suspected MERS cases reported to the CHP for investigation involve patients with a history of contact with camels in the Middle East. The CHP strongly advises travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and

environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS page of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the WHO's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

[HAD opens temporary cold shelters](#)

In view of the cold weather, the Home Affairs Department has opened 18 temporary shelters today (December 6) for people in need of the service.

The temporary shelters will remain open during the daytime tomorrow (December 7) when the cold weather warning is still in force.

To ensure that cold shelter users can rest in a quiet and undisturbed environment, members of the public or agencies wishing to make donations to shelter users are requested to register with the staff of the shelter first. Donors will then be directed to place the donated items at a specified indoor location. The staff will help notify the shelter users to collect the items on their own.

Anyone seeking temporary refuge or with any questions about the donation arrangements at the cold shelters may call the department's hotline 2835 1473 for more information.

The 18 temporary cold shelters are located at:

Hong Kong Districts:

Central and Western:

Sai Ying Pun Community Complex Community Hall
3/F, Sai Ying Pun Community Complex, 2 High Street, Sai Ying Pun

Eastern:

Causeway Bay Community Centre
3/F, 7 Fook Yum Road, Causeway Bay

Southern:

Lei Tung Community Hall
Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau

Wan Chai:

Wan Chai Activities Centre
LG/F, Wan Chai Market, 258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai

Kowloon Districts:

Kowloon City:

Hung Hom Community Hall

1/F, Kowloon City Government Offices, 42 Bailey Street, Hung Hom

Kwun Tong:

Lam Tin (West) Estate Community Centre

71 Kai Tin Road, Lam Tin

Sham Shui Po:

Nam Cheong District Community Centre

1 Cheong San Lane, Sham Shui Po

Wong Tai Sin:

Tsz Wan Shan (South) Estate Community Centre

45 Wan Wah Street, Tsz Wan Shan

Yau Tsim Mong:

Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre

60 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei

New Territories:

Islands:

Tung Chung Community Hall

G/F, Tung Chung Municipal Services Building,

39 Man Tung Road, Tung Chung

Kwai Tsing:

Tai Wo Hau Estate Community Centre

15 Tai Wo Hau Road, Kwai Chung

North:

Cheung Wah Community Hall

Cheung Wah Estate, Fanling

Sai Kung:

Hang Hau Community Hall

G/F, Sai Kung Tseung Kwan O Government Complex,

38 Pui Shing Road, Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O

Sha Tin:

Lung Hang Estate Community Centre

Lung Hang Estate, Sha Tin

Tai Po:

Tai Po Community Centre

2 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po

Tsuen Wan:

Lei Muk Shue Community Hall

G/F, Hong Shue House, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen Wan

Tuen Mun:

Butterfly Bay Community Centre

Butterfly Estate (near Tip Sum House), Tuen Mun

Yuen Long:

Long Ping Community Hall

Long Ping Estate, Yuen Long