

Cake sample found to contain excessive Bacillus cereus

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (August 27) announced that a cake sample was found to contain an excessive amount of *Bacillus cereus*, a pathogen. The CFS is following up on the case.

A CFS spokesman said, "Subsequent to announcing earlier that a cake sample taken from a bakery in Kwai Chung was found to contain an excessive amount of *Bacillus cereus*, the CFS took another cake sample from the same bakery for testing during a follow-up investigation. A similar irregularity was detected, with the test result showing that the sample contained *Bacillus cereus* at a level of 660 000 per gram. Under the Microbiological Guidelines for Food, ready-to-eat food containing *Bacillus cereus* at a level of more than 100 000 per gram is considered unsatisfactory."

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the vendor concerned of the unsatisfactory test result and the vendor has already stopped selling the product concerned according to CFS' instructions. The CFS has earlier provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff of the vendor concerned, and has requested them to carry out a thorough cleaning and disinfection. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence. The above-mentioned unsatisfactory sample was taken before the vendor carried out a thorough cleaning and disinfection.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food available for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

Bacillus cereus is commonly found in the environment. Unhygienic conditions in food processing and storage may give rise to its growth. Consuming food contaminated with excessive *Bacillus cereus* or its heat-stable toxins may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting and diarrhoea.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action in order to safeguard public health and food safety.