

CFS follows up on packaging surface of food sample tested positive for novel coronavirus

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (June 15) said that the CFS received a notification from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) that among the environmental samples collected at the residence of a confirmed patient of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), a sample from the packaging of a prepackaged frozen crocodile spare ribs imported from Thailand was found to be positive for the COVID-19 virus, while the testing for the remaining household environment samples is still ongoing. Upon learning of the incident, the CFS has requested the vendor to stop sale of the product concerned for the time being, and to provide the CFS samples of products for testing, with the results pending. The CFS will continue to follow up on the DH's investigation, including the source of the genetic fragment of the virus from the positive sample, and take appropriate action. An investigation is ongoing, and the source of that positive household sample is still unknown.

To prevent the import of COVID-19 virus through imported frozen foods, the CFS has stepped up precautionary testing measures, including testing of various types of frozen foods and their packaging imported from different countries/regions, which involves taking samples at the Airport Food Inspection Offices and cold stores of importers. As at the end of May this year, over 10 000 samples of food and their packaging were collected for testing of the novel coronavirus. The test results, including those for over 40 related crocodile products imported from Thailand, were all negative. The CFS will continue the surveillance on imported frozen foods and their packaging to closely monitor the risk of the spread of the COVID-19 virus through imported frozen foods.

COVID-19 can be transmitted by droplets and close contact. Members of the public should always observe personal, food and environmental hygiene. The CFS reminds the public to pay attention to the following:

- Always keep hands clean, particularly before touching mouth, nose or eyes; before and after handling chilled and frozen food and its packaging, if any; after going to toilet and before eating. Rub hands with liquid soap for at least 20 seconds when washing;
- Handle raw and cooked food separately, pay special attention when handling raw meat and offal, to avoid cross contamination of food; and
- Cook food thoroughly and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.