

CFS proactively follows up on food poisoning clusters involving sandwiches

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (August 19) that it is proactively following up on two food poisoning clusters involving sandwiches, including inspecting the food factory concerned. A sample of smoked salmon collected from the premises was found to contain a pathogen, Group D Salmonella. The CFS is following up on the case.

"Upon notification by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health earlier, the CFS immediately sent staff to the food factory concerned in Fo Tan to conduct investigation and take food and environmental samples for testing. The CFS has instructed the premises to stop selling and discard the food item concerned immediately. The CFS has also provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff, and instructed them to suspend operation in order to carry out thorough cleaning and disinfection, as well as to implement improvement measures to ensure food safety," a CFS spokesman said.

The test result showed the presence of Salmonella in 25 grams of the smoked salmon sample, exceeding the criterion of the Microbiological Guidelines for Food which states that Salmonella should not be detected in 25g of a ready-to-eat food sample. The CFS conducted source tracing of the incriminated batch of smoked salmon and collected a sample at the importer level for testing. The test result was satisfactory, i.e. no Salmonella spp. was detected in 25g of the smoked salmon sample. The CFS has informed the food factory concerned of the unsatisfactory test result. The premises is now still closed to implement improvement measures.

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

"Salmonella infection may cause fever and gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. The effects on infants, young children, the elderly and persons with a weak immune system could be more severe and may even lead to death," the spokesman said.

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