

CFS takes precautions to minimise risk of virus transmission through frozen food

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (December 7) said that as at December 6, the FEHD has arranged voluntary free COVID-19 testing services for 1 800 staff members of licensed cold stores and the CFS has taken over 400 samples of different frozen food or their packaging from different areas for testing of the COVID-19 virus, with all the test results negative.

For the sake of prudence, the FEHD will strengthen the relevant preventive measures, including continuing to arrange the voluntary free tests for practitioners of licensed cold stores and stepping up routine sampling of imported frozen food for virus testing, so as to closely monitor the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through imported frozen food.

In addition, the CFS, jointly with the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, have issued guidelines in early November this year to remind frozen food handlers of the potential infection risks and preventive measures covering personal hygiene, personal protective equipment, environmental hygiene and social distancing. The guidelines also include recommendations on preventive measures such as cleaning and disinfection of working environments regarding freezers and vehicles for transportation as well as food packaging surfaces.

A spokesman for the CFS said that it has been closely monitoring the risk of spread of COVID-19 through imported frozen food and noted the successive detection of the COVID-19 virus on imported frozen food or packaging in the Mainland. The FEHD has also issued the above-mentioned guidelines to the operators of licensed food premises to remind the practitioners in the premises of the potential infection risks and preventive measures when handling frozen food. The FEHD has been following up with the trade on the strengthening of the relevant epidemic prevention work, and noticed that the trade has proactively implemented the recommended preventive measures.

The spokesman reminded members of the public to maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene at all times, including washing hands before and after handling raw and cooked foods; cooking food thoroughly; and separating raw meat and internal organs from cooked foods. Food business operators and food handlers should always keep their hands clean and frequently clean and disinfect surfaces, especially food contact surfaces in food premises (such as tableware and insulated bags for takeaways) and high-touch points (such as door handlers and water taps). The CFS has uploaded the relevant information to its website (www.cfs.gov.hk/covid19) for public reference.