

# CFS urges public not to consume prepackaged flour batch with possible E. coli 026 contamination

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (September 20) urged the public not to consume a batch of prepackaged flour imported from the United States (US), as the product concerned might have been contaminated with Escherichia coli (E. coli) 026. The trade should also stop using or selling the batch of the product concerned immediately should they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Unbleached All Purpose Flour  
Brand: Gold Medal  
Place of origin: US  
Net weight: Five pounds per pack  
Best-before Date: September 6, 2020

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System, noted a notice by the US Food and Drug Administration that the above-mentioned batch of the product was under recall by the manufacturer as the product concerned might have been contaminated with E. coli 026. Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately contacted local major importers and retailers for follow-up."

Preliminary investigation found that a local importer, the Dairy Farm Company, Limited, had imported about 220 packs of the affected batch of the product. All had been sold out at its outlets. The importer concerned has initiated a recall according to CFS instructions. Members of the public may call the company's hotline at 2299 1133 for enquiries during office hours about the recall.

Some strains of E. coli, e.g. E. coli 026, can cause diseases through the production of a toxin called Shiga toxin. These strains are called Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC). STEC infection is transmitted by faecal-oral route through contaminated food and water, or direct contact with STEC carrying animals. Moreover, due to poor personal hygiene, person-to-person transmission of this pathogen is possible through oral-faecal route. Symptoms of STEC infection include abdominal pain and watery diarrhoea that may in some cases progress to bloody diarrhoea. Fever and vomiting may also occur. Intestinal bleeding and serious complications such as hemolytic uraemic syndrome may also develop in some people. E. coli, including STEC, cannot survive under high temperature and can be killed by thorough cooking.

The spokesman urged consumers not to consume the affected batch of the product if they have bought it. The trade should also stop using or selling

the affected batch of the product concerned immediately if they possess it.

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