

Sample of ham and egg bun detected with excessive Bacillus cereus

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 23) announced that a sample of ham and egg bun was found to contain an excessive amount of *Bacillus cereus*, a pathogen. The CFS is following up on the case.

"Subsequent to announcing that a sample of ham and egg bun taken from a convenience store in Sheung Wan was found to contain excessive *Bacillus cereus*, the CFS detected a similar irregularity in another ham and egg bun sample of the same kind but with a different production date taken from the same convenience store for testing during follow-up investigation. The test result showed that the sample contained *Bacillus cereus* at a level of 1.1 million per gram. Under the Microbiological Guidelines for Food, if ready-to-eat food contains *Bacillus cereus* at a level of more than 100 000 per gram, it is considered unsatisfactory," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity. The vendor has already, according to the CFS' instructions, stopped selling the affected kind of food at all branch stores and the food factory concerned has also stopped production of the affected product. The above-mentioned unsatisfactory sample was taken before the sale of the affected product was stopped. The CFS has also inspected the food factory and its hygiene conditions are satisfactory. Health education on food safety and hygiene has been provided for the staff of the vendor and the food factory. Should there be sufficient evidence, prosecution will be instituted," the spokesman said.

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* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting and diarrhoea.

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