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France

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

E.Coli O157 Contamination Causes Huge Recall of Frozen Beef Patties

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Report Highlights: A food poisoning incident, which caused the hospitalization of 26 people, mainly children, in southwest France was traced to the contamination of frozen beef patties by bacteria E.Coli O157.H7. Three lots (or 300,000 patties - 30 metric tons) were found contaminated, all coming from one SOVIBA slaughterhouse in western France. All lots are being recalled and since some patties were exported to the European Union, the French Ministry of Agriculture has notified the European Commission of this contamination. Annually, 110 to 120 reported cases of E.Coli contamination send people to hospital in France, with less than one death per year.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Paris [FR1]
[FR]

Food poisoning which caused the hospitalization of 26 people, mainly children, in southwest France was traced to frozen beef patties contaminated with E. Coli. The first alert came on October 25 when doctors notified the French Sanitary Surveillance Institute (Institut National de Veille Sanitaire - INVS, similar to the CDC in the United States) of unusual levels of hemolytic uremic syndromes among children in southwest France. The first cases were diagnosed on October 5. The poisoning was traced to the beef patties on October 30. As of early November, six children were still in intensive care in Toulouse with full blood cleaning and intensive dialysis.

Biological analysis made by the National French Veterinarian Service of Lyon found that the patties contained significant amounts of E.Coli O157.H7 bacteria. All the products were sold by the hypermarket retailer Leclerc under its own brand "ChanteGrill" . Three lots, or about 300,000 patties (30 metric tons) were contaminated. They all came from the same slaughterhouse, SOVIBA, near Angers in western France. Since some of the lots were exported to other European countries, the French Ministry of Agriculture officially notified the European Union of this contamination.

Using credit card information as well as consumers records, the retailer Leclerc is calling all its customers to recall the contaminated lots. A hotline number has also been installed. It is expected that 80 to 90 percent of the products sold will be recalled.

According to a study published in 2004, the INVS reports 110 to 120 cases of E.Coli contamination in food products every year, causing one death per year on average. According to the INVS, between 228 and 691 deaths per year are caused in France by food poisoning:

<i>Source</i>	<i>Hospitalizations</i>	<i>Deaths</i>
Salmonella	5,691 to 10,202	92 to 535
Campylobacter	2,598 to 3516	13 to 18
Listeria	30	78
E. Coli	110 to 220	0 to 1
Hepatitis A	52 to 77	2
Toxoplasmosis	426	35
Total	10,188 to 17,771	228 to 691

The complete report (in French) from INVS on food poisoning in France can be downloaded at this address :

http://www.invs.sante.fr/publications/2004/inf_origine_alimentaire/inf_origine_alimentaire.pdf