

Dioxin egg scare prompts seizure of German food

Imports of eggs and poultry meat from Germany have been sealed for testing amid fears they may be contaminated with poisonous toxins.

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Tuesday, January 11, 2011

Imports of eggs and poultry meat from Germany have been sealed for testing amid fears they may be contaminated with poisonous toxins.

The controller of the Centre for Food Safety, Constance Chan Hon-ye, said of seven sample eggs locally one was confirmed to have come from Germany.

"The egg was sent to the Government Laboratory for testing and the result is expected to be available in seven days," Chan said.

The government would find out where the other six eggs came from.

She said the government would also seal all imported German eggs and poultry meat for dioxin testing.

If the imports are not contaminated, they will be released to the market.

In the meantime, Chan requested members of the public to stay clear of such German products.

Secretary for Food and Health York Chow Yat-ngok called on traders to stop selling eggs imported from Germany and urged the public not to buy them.

On whether there should be an import ban, Chow said there is still no advice from the European Commission on taking such measures because the problem may be under control.

"We are in close contact with relevant authorities in Europe as well as in Germany itself to see what type of advice should be given to the public," he said.

"We will follow up on this very closely. The Centre for Food Safety is investigating and analyzing all the data available so far."

Chow added that as there are many egg products available, the scale of the dioxins' impact is still unclear.

It may not only affect chickens, but also other feed," he said.

Chow said the Centre for Food Safety sealed German eggs found in Wong Tai Sin, Sha Tin and Hung Hom and asked members of the public to contact the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department if they find German eggs on the market.

Hong Kong Egg Merchants Association chairman Yeung Kam-yim said the industry will cooperate if requested to stop selling German eggs and if an import ban is imposed.

Yeung also hopes the government can release the test results as soon as possible in order to clarify the situation over the handling of remaining stock.

Authorities in Britain and the Netherlands are investigating the extent of contamination in products containing German eggs, while South Korea and Slovakia have stopped the sale of some animal products imported from Germany.

Dioxin is a toxin created by industrial processes and waste burning.

Over a period of time it can cause health problems in humans, including miscarriages and cancer.