

FDA to inspect Chinese-imported seafood

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced an expansion Thursday of its import control of certain Chinese farm-raised seafood.

FDA officials said they begin detaining Chinese imported catfish, bass, shrimp, dace, and eel at the border until the shipments are proven free of residues from drugs not approved for use in U.S. farm-raised aquatic animals.

"We're taking this strong step because of current and continuing evidence that certain Chinese aquaculture products imported into the United States contain illegal substances that are not permitted in seafood sold in the United States," said Dr. David Acheson, the FDA's assistant commissioner for food protection.

Officials said October 2006 through May 2007 sampling repeatedly found farm-raised Chinese seafood was contaminated with antimicrobial agents that are not approved for such use in the United States. The antimicrobials included nitrofurans, malachite green, gentian violet -- all shown to be carcinogenic with long-term exposure in lab animals.

The FDA said it was not seeking recall of any products already in U.S. commerce since the levels of the drug residues have been very low, most often at or near the minimum level of detection.

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