

US reports incidents of tainted ricotta cheese

September 13 2012

(AP)—U.S. health officials say imported Italian ricotta cheese tainted with listeria bacteria is linked to 14 illnesses including at least one death.

The ricotta salata [cheese](#) distributed by Forever Cheese Inc. of New York is linked to illnesses in 11 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Forever Cheese issued a recall of one lot—800 wheels of ricotta salata, or roughly 4,800 pounds (2,177 kilograms)—on Monday.

Jeff DiMeo of Forever Cheese said the recalled Frescolina brand ricotta salata cheese is from one batch manufactured in Italy's Puglia region but would not name the Italian company that manufactured it. The [Food and Drug Administration](#) confirmed listeria was present in an uncut sample of cheese from that batch.

Ricotta salata is a salty, white cheese made from pasteurized sheep's milk. It is not the same as soft ricotta cheese sold in tubs and used to make lasagna.

Listeria is rare but deadlier than well-known pathogens such as salmonella and E. coli. It is most dangerous to pregnant women, the elderly and others with compromised immune systems.

It was not immediately clear how many deaths were caused by the [listeria outbreak](#). The CDC said listeriosis contributed to "at least one" of two deaths in New York and Nebraska but did not elaborate. A spokeswoman for the New York City Department of Health and Mental

Hygiene said Wednesday the department was investigating a death linked to the listeria and a spokeswoman for the Nebraska Department of Health said the same strain had contributed to the death of a woman in her 80s.

A third deceased person in Minnesota was infected with listeriosis linked to the cheese but that was not thought to be the primary cause of the person's death, a spokesman for the Minnesota Department of Health said.

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