

Portugal finds horse painkiller drug in burgers, meatballs

March 7 2013

Burgers and meatballs sold in Portugal by French retailer Auchan have been found to contain horsemeat with small traces of an animal painkiller that is potentially harmful to humans, Portugal's consumer watchdog said Thursday.

The country's consumer protection association DECO said it had "detected anti-inflammatory drugs in [horsemeat](#) found in food products on sale in Portugal, which may pose a risk to public health as the use of such drugs is banned in animals destined for [human consumption](#)."

"Phenylbutazone was detected in samples of Auchan hamburger and in Polegar meatballs, which according to an initial analysis, contained horse DNA," the group said in a statement.

Polegar is Auchan's low-price brand.

According to Deco, the samples showed only low-level traces of phenylbutazone, also known as "bute", and did "not present an immediate danger" to people's health.

The association announced on Monday that these meat products sold in Portugal by Auchan, as well as lasagnes sold by the Spanish El Corte Ingles group, contained traces of unlabelled horsemeat.

The Portuguese branch of Auchan confirmed that the meat products, bought by Deco on February 20 for testing, were removed from shelves

on February 22 after tests done by the French retailer also revealed the presence of equine meat.

The scandal of horsemeat being passed on as beef has engulfed a string of European countries in recent weeks, with millions of ready meals pulled from [supermarket shelves](#).

The row has embroiled major international corporations including Swiss food giant Nestle, which recently recalled lasagnes destined for restaurants in Portugal.

Late last month, Portuguese [health authorities](#) seized 79 tonnes of "meat and meat-based products" destined for retail and distribution outlets that contained horsemeat despite not being labelled as such.

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Citation: Portugal finds horse painkiller drug in burgers, meatballs (2013, March 7) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-03-portugal-horse-painkiller-drug-burgers.html>

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