

Officials: Listeriosis not cause of three deaths, may be factor

March 14 2015, by Heather Hollingsworth And Juan A. Lozano



This undated photo provided by Blue Bell shows a Blue Bell Cotton Candy Bar. The deaths of three people who developed a foodborne illness linked to some Blue Bell ice cream products have prompted the Texas icon's first product recall in its 108-year history. Five people, in all, developed listeriosis in Kansas after eating products from one production line at the Blue Bell creamery in Brenham, Texas, according to a statement Friday from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA says listeria bacteria were found in samples of Blue Bell Chocolate Chip Country Cookies, Great Divide Bars, Sour Pop Green Apple Bars, Cotton Candy Bars, Scoops, Vanilla Stick Slices, Almond Bars and No Sugar Added Moo Bars. (AP Photo/Blue Bell)

A foodborne illness linked to some ice cream products might have been a contributing factor in the deaths of three hospital patients in Kansas,

health officials said Saturday.

But listeriosis didn't cause the deaths, according to Kansas Department of Health and Environment spokeswoman Sara Belfry.

Officials have not released the names of the five patients at Via Christi St. Francis hospital in Wichita, Kansas, who developed listeriosis in after eating products from one production line at the Blue Bell creamery in Brenham, Texas.

But the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the five individuals were older adults and three of them are women. The CDC did not specify the gender of those patients who died.

The five patients became ill with listeriosis during their hospitalizations for unrelated causes between December 2013 and January 2015. But hospital spokeswoman Maria Loving said she couldn't discuss why the patients were hospitalized, citing patient confidentiality laws.

According to the CDC, information available for four of the five patients shows they had eaten while hospitalized milkshakes made with a Blue Bell ice cream product called "Scoops" in the month before the infection.

The FDA says listeria bacteria were found in samples of Scoops, as well as other Blue Bell ice cream products.

Blue Bell says it has recovered all recalled products that were in stores and in storage.



This undated photo provided by Blue Bell shows Blue Bell Almond Bar. The deaths of three people who developed a foodborne illness linked to some Blue Bell ice cream products have prompted the Texas icon's first product recall in its 108-year history. Five people, in all, developed listeriosis in Kansas after eating products from one production line at the Blue Bell creamery in Brenham, Texas, according to a statement Friday from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA says listeria bacteria were found in samples of Blue Bell Chocolate Chip Country Cookies, Great Divide Bars, Sour Pop Green Apple Bars, Cotton Candy Bars, Scoops, Vanilla Stick Slices, Almond Bars and No Sugar Added Moo Bars. (AP Photo/Blue Bell)

The Texas Department of State Health Services said facilities like Blue Bell's are inspected on a monthly basis. The agency added that no enforcement action had previously been taken against the facility in Brenham and it is operating in compliance with food safety laws.

It's not unusual to see listeria outbreaks linked to dairy products, including ice cream, said William Marler, an attorney who represented victims of a 2011 listeria outbreak that killed 33 people and was traced to a Colorado cantaloupe farm.

Listeriosis is a life-threatening infection caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria called *Listeria monocytogenes*, the CDC said. The disease primarily affects pregnant women and their newborns, older adults, and people with immune systems weakened by cancer, cancer treatments, or other serious conditions.



This undated photo provided by Blue Bell shows Blue Bell Chocolate Chip Country Cookies. The deaths of three people who developed a foodborne illness linked to some Blue Bell ice cream products have prompted the Texas icon's first product recall in its 108-year history. Five people, in all, developed listeriosis in Kansas after eating products from one production line at the Blue Bell creamery in Brenham, Texas, according to a statement Friday from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA says listeria bacteria were found in samples of Blue Bell Chocolate Chip Country Cookies, Great Divide Bars, Sour Pop Green Apple Bars, Cotton Candy Bars, Scoops, Vanilla Stick Slices, Almond Bars and No Sugar Added Moo Bars. (AP Photo/Blue Bell)



This undated photo provided by Blue Bell shows Blue Bell Great Divide Bar. The deaths of three people who developed a foodborne illness linked to some Blue Bell ice cream products have prompted the Texas icon's first product recall in its 108-year history. Five people, in all, developed listeriosis in Kansas after eating products from one production line at the Blue Bell creamery in Brenham, Texas, according to a statement Friday from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA says listeria bacteria were found in samples of Blue Bell Chocolate Chip Country Cookies, Great Divide Bars, Sour Pop Green Apple Bars, Cotton Candy Bars, Scoops, Vanilla Stick Slices, Almond Bars and No Sugar Added Moo Bars. (AP Photo/Blue Bell)



This undated photo provided by Blue Bell shows a Blue Bell Cotton Candy Bar.

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