

Hong Kong scrambles to inspect EU eggs as insecticide found

August 12 2017

Hong Kong is increasing inspections of eggs imported from Europe, officials said Saturday after some were found to be contaminated with an insecticide in a scandal which has now spread beyond the EU.

Millions of eggs have been pulled from [supermarket shelves](#) across Europe and dozens of [poultry farms](#) closed since the discovery of fipronil, which can be harmful to humans, was made public on August 1.

But in a sign the crisis is going global, Brussels also announced Friday that Hong Kong had received some tainted eggs from the Netherlands, with the southern Chinese city becoming the first place in Asia known to be affected.

Health minister Sophia Chan said Saturday authorities were "strengthening" inspections of eggs from Europe.

"The Centre for Food Safety is now inspecting eggs coming from Europe closely, no matter at the import, or at the retail level," Chan said.

Hong Kong's Centre for Food Safety (CFS) said last Friday it found two samples of eggs from the Netherlands to have exceeded local fipronil limits.

"The CFS has informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities and requested the trade to stop sale and remove from shelves" it said in a statement on its website.

Free range eggs from Spain were seen on sale at a grocery store in east Hong Kong Island Saturday.

The owner said his Spanish [eggs](#) had already been checked for chemicals, but that the US and Hong Kong offerings may be "safer".

Fipronil is commonly used to get rid of fleas, lice and ticks from animals but is banned by the European Union from use in the food industry.

The EU insists there is no threat to human health, but the World Health Organization (WHO) says that when eaten in large quantities it can harm people's kidneys, liver and thyroid glands.

Brussels said the 15 affected EU countries were Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Sweden, Britain, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Denmark, along with non-EU Switzerland.

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