



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
Issued by: Department of Health
Date: Thursday, 17 May 2018

GOVERNMENT UPDATE ON LISTERIA OUTBREAK: JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Pretoria: The Government, led by the Departments of Health (DoH), (DAFF), Trade and Industry (**the dti**) and the National Consumer Commission (NCC) and the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) has been working tirelessly to control and end the listeria outbreak. This statement serve to provide an update to the nation regarding progress and achievements towards controlling and ending the *Listeria* outbreak, as well as strengthening systems to prevent future outbreaks.

1. Since identification of the source of the outbreak and recall of implicated products, the number of cases of listeria has declined drastically as evident in the latest situation report (www.nicd.ac.za).
2. The recall and destruction of implicated food products both within South Africa and internationally (those that were exported) have been closely monitored by the National Consumer Commission (NCC), the Department of Environmental Affairs and district environmental health practitioners (EHPs) in various municipalities. Certificates of destruction have been received from national and international agencies.
3. Factories that have produced implicated products ceased production on 5 March 2018 and have been inspected by a team of national, provincial, district officials and World Health Organisation (WHO) food safety experts. All these factories have commenced with an extensive revision of their production processes and safety procedures. Implementation of their plans will be monitored by district officials with the support of the same inspection team to ensure adherence to national and international norms and standards regarding food safety.
4. DAFF continues to liaise with international trading partners to provide reassurance that the risk of Listeria is confined to recalled products, and that all implicated products are recalled and destroyed. Further, DAFF has rescinded export certification of foodstuffs implicated in the outbreak.

5. Imported meat and all imported products of animal origin continue to be monitored and inspected as per existing procedures by DAFF officials for the presence of recognised pathogens including *Listeria monocytogenes*. However, additional testing by Port Health officials (under DoH), which was implemented as part of investigations to determine the source of the outbreak, has ceased. Locally, provincial Departments of Agriculture are also conducting inspections at abattoirs.
6. Environmental Health Services at District level are being strengthened through provision of intensive training in assessment of food safety at production facilities and appropriate specimen collection procedures for food and environmental swabs. Training commenced in Gauteng Province on 10 May 2018.
7. National and international meetings have been held as follows:
 - A national meeting of provincial communicable disease co-ordinators, health promoters, environmental health practitioners and veterinary public health officials was held on 23-24 April 2018 to share updates and finalise strategic responses to the listeria outbreak.
 - A WHO-sponsored meeting of 16 international trade partners was held on 19-21 April 2018 to support development of contingency plans for listeriosis.
8. Risk profiling of food processing premises is underway and preparations have been made for a programme of inspections and laboratory testing of high risk processing facilities of food that may be at risk for *Listeria* contamination.
9. National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) food testing capacity has been strengthened through employment of additional human resources, equipment and updated standard operating procedures. Specimen collection procedures have been refined.
10. A review of food safety legislation is being conducted. A consultative meeting regarding compulsory specifications for processed meat is being convened during the week of 14 May 2018.
11. Communicators in all departments are working with Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). Concerted efforts are being made to keep the public informed with accurate health information regarding transmission of listeriosis and its prevention through multiple communication and media channels as well as community engagement activities intended to reach the vulnerable groups. Further, the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi will address Ministers of the African Regions World Health Assembly about the South Africa's situation report on 19 May 2018.

All the above activities are being implemented according to an emergency response plan (summary available at www.nicd.ac.za) and co-ordinated through the activities of a multisectoral incident management team supported by the WHO and funded through the Department of Health, the WHO and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

For enquiries and more information, please contact:

Mr Foster Mohale National Department of Health Tel: 0724323792 Email: Foster.mohale@health.gov.za	Mr Steve Galane Department of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries Tel: 083 635 7346 Email: SteveGAL@daff.gov.za
Mr Sidwell Medupe Trade and Industry (the dti) Tel: 079 492 1774 Email: MSMedupe@thedti.gov.za	Mr Albi Modise Department of Environmental Affairs Tel: 083 490 2871 Email: AModise@environment.gov.za

Issued by Government Communication and Information System