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The President's Message



By John Calcagno
Institute President

By now, we've heard plenty about the XL Foods Inc. recall. The plant remains closed after more than a month.

I just received word that the U.S. Food Safety Inspection Service has tripled its estimate of the amount of recalled beef that was imported into the U.S. from the XL Foods Inc. plant in Brooks, Alberta.

The agency has issued a revised statement stating that an estimated 1,134,000 kilograms of beef entered the U.S. that could potentially be contaminated with E. coli. The previous estimate, released on September 28, said that almost 404,000 kilograms of the affected beef had entered the U.S.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, meanwhile, added yet more items to its long list of beef products that have been pulled from store shelves across Canada.

The latest additions affect raw beef and ready-to-eat products sold in B.C. under the Africa Trading and HanAhReum Mart brands, or sold at Urban Fare.

The number of illnesses linked to beef products from the plant stands at 10 people from three provinces.

E. coli was first detected at the plant on Sept. 4, but it took 12 days for the first of numerous public alerts to be issued.

The U.S. agency statement says products in that country that are subject to recall include steaks, roasts, mechanically tenderized steaks and roasts and ground beef.

It says the products are considered

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Canada's XL Foods To Increase Safeguards After Huge Beef Recall

XL Foods, the owner of the Canadian beef plant that is at the center of one of Canada's largest meat recalls, said it will increase food safety measures once the government allows the Brooks, Alberta, facility to reopen.

It was the company's first statement since the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) suspended the plant's operating license last week, as more steaks, roasts, ground beef and other products are recalled that may contain E. coli bacteria.

In all, the recall involves millions of pounds of beef produced from late August to early September and shipped to stores in Canada and the United States. Beef from the plant has been linked to five illnesses and the recall led to one call for Canada's agriculture minister to resign.

"We believed XL Foods was a

leader in the beef-processing industry with our food safety protocols, but we have now learned it was not enough," the company said in a release. "We take full responsibility for our plant operations and the food it produces, which is consumed by Canadians from coast to coast."

To improve safety, XL said it will use video cameras to audit plant processes, will expand washing the sides of beef with high-pressure hot water to eliminate E. coli contamination, and add staff to each shift to monitor sanitary procedures.

XL Foods said when the plant does reopen, it will begin with limited production.

The recall of beef from the plant began September 16, almost two weeks after the CFIA learned of

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Where's The Beef? Babies At 6 Months Need Iron-Rich Foods Like Meat

When Carli Sussman's son Oliver was 5 months old, she and her husband started giving him cooked meat to suck on as an adjunct to the breast milk he was getting as his primary diet.

"The first thing we gave him was a strip of rib-eye steak," recalls the Vancouver mom. "At that point, he wasn't actually eating any of it. We were just giving him pieces of food that we had. And he was just sort of putting them in his mouth, which is what 5-month-olds do with everything."

So there were no surprises for Sussman in updated infant-feeding guidelines recently released by Health Canada, which advise that babies at 6

months old need to start ingesting iron-rich foods -- including beef and poultry.

Those guidelines, aimed at health-care providers for dissemination to parents, say that babies at that age need to start eating meat, meat alternatives like legumes, and even eggs and fish.

The recommendations, posted without fanfare on Health Canada's website, seemed to take some parents by surprise.

"What probably really got the attention was the fact that some of these examples were new to people," says Jennifer McCrea, a nutrition adviser for Health Canada who helped prepare the

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Canada's XL Foods Safeguards...

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the contamination and began an investigation. CFIA has said it did not recall meat earlier because the products originally flagged had not made it onto store shelves.

Since then, the recall has been expanded several times, the latest being last week, and now involves more than 1500 products.

Canadian Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz said on Thursday that the plant will not open until the head of CFIA assures him that it poses no health risk, and defended the government's handling of the crisis.

"We acted as quickly and responsibly as we possibly could," he said. The U.S. stopped importing meat from the plant on September 13, several days before Canada began to recall meat.

The recall affected food stores across Canada and most U.S. states and include Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Costco Wholesale Corp, Safeway and Loblaw Companies Ltd.

CFIA has said that it identified deficiencies at the plant that separately would not have led to E. coli contamination, but collectively played a role.

Opposition legislators in Canada on Thursday called for Agriculture Minister Ritz to resign and pressed for a sweeping review of food safety systems by Canada's auditor general.

The CFIA has pointed to a five-day delay in XL Foods complying with the agency's request for information, prior

to the recall. XL did not directly address that concern in its statement, but said that it has always supplied testing results to CFIA inspectors daily.

Illnesses in five people in Alberta have been connected to the beef from XL Foods, according to the province's

health ministry.

The meat recall is the biggest in Canada since at least 2008, when 22 people died after eating deli meat from a Maple Leaf Foods plant.

Canada is the world's sixth-largest exporter of beef and veal. ■

Babies At 6 Months Need Meat...

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guidelines.

But they would not necessarily be new to health professionals, she says. "Some would have been familiar with them. For some other people, this may be the first time that they've noticed that guidance."

McCrea, a member of the 14-person working group that drafted the slightly revised guidelines, says the document doesn't represent a change from the 2004-05 recommendations, but is a reaffirmation of advice stressing the importance of introducing solid foods.

"Meat can be one of those iron-rich first foods, but there are a whole range of options," she says. "In this guidance, I think what we tried to do was just add more examples to add to the clarity ... that although (iron-fortified) infant cereals have been and really still are a popular choice, there are other options that are iron-rich as well."

The guidelines, penned by experts at Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric

Society (CPS), Dietitians of Canada and the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada, say: "Infants should be offered iron-containing foods two or more times each day ... Breastfeeding continues to provide the main source of nutrition as other foods are introduced."

Dr. Jeff Critch, a pediatrician in St. John's, N.L., who was also a member of the Infant Feeding Joint Working Group, says it's essential for babies to start getting more iron into their diet starting at about six months.

"Iron is very important for our blood. It's also important for child development" — especially neurological development, says Critch.

During the last trimester of pregnancy, the fetus builds up a store of iron from the mother, which carries the child through the first half-year of life.

After that, the child needs the nutrients found in meat and meat products. ■

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"Who's Who in Meat" Online Edition Makes Debut

The Meat Trade Institute is proud to announce that its "Who's Who in Meat" Directory is now available for real-time access on the internet. The web based edition can be accessed at web address: www.spcnetwork.com/ww by clicking on the "View or Download Current Edition Now" option at the top of the "Main Menu" page.

Once at the "View Page", you can review Who's Who with a simple click of your mouse.

The online edition includes hot-links to the websites of all advertisers.

A huge new benefit for Who's Who in Meat participants is a vastly largest distribution for the directory. In recent years, the Institute has distributed 1200-1500 directories per year. The online edition, though only launched in the last 60 days, has already resulted in more than 2600 new users of the book with thousands more expected.

Make sure your company is part of it.

The next edition of Who's Who in Meat is currently in production. Please go to the Who's Who website to review your company's listing information. The online edition is fully searchable so you should be able to locate your listing in short order.

If your listing requires an update, please use the online listing form on the main website or send updated listing info via email to: spcnetwork@earthlink.net. You can also call the publisher directly at 631-661-2727. ■



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The President's Message

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"adulterated" and should be returned to the place of purchase or destroyed.

The XL plant handles 35% of Canada's beef.

Another Recall... Texas Meat Company Recalling Beef, Pork Products

Federal health officials say a Dallas-based meat distributor is recalling about 8,200 pounds of beef and pork products because they weren't inspected and were improperly labeled.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service said Monday one product from Lao Chareune Foods could not be labeled as a pork snack stick because it was raw. The agency said the products were distributed to retail stores in Louisiana and Texas.

The products recalled were 3-ounce and 8-ounce packages containing "Pork Snack Stick;" 3.2-ounce packages of "Seasoned Fried Beef;" 1.76-ounce packages of "Fried Pork Skins;" and 1.2-ounce packages of "Sliced Fried Pork Ears."

Federal officials said they hadn't received any reports of illness from consumption of the products. ■



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