NY Salmonella Cases Tied To Chicken Livers

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NEW YORK (AP) -- Kosher broiled chicken livers distributed to delis and other establishments have been linked to dozens of cases of foodborne illness throughout the state, health officials said Wednesday.

The manufacturer of the liver, Queens-based Schreiber Processing Corp., issued a recall for the product sold under the MealMart brand. Health officials said they had identified 89 cases of salmonella following consumption of the product, including 56 in the city and 33 in nine upstate counties.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also said a cluster of salmonella illnesses were detected in New Jersey and linked to the product. The livers also were sold in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Minnesota, though there were no reports Wednesday of outbreaks in those states linked to the product.

Salmonella bacteria infection includes diarrhea, abdominal pain and fever. Rare cases can lead to death.

Confusion appears to have been caused by the labeling of the meat as "broiled," which might have been interpreted as meaning "pre-cooked" or "ready-to-eat," the state Health Department said. The product is not safe to eat until it has been cooked further.

According to its website, Schreiber Processing Corp. slaughters, processes and distributes kosher beef, veal, lamb and poultry. It has been around for nearly 60 years.

Mordechai Milworn, the company's quality control manager, said the recall involves 10-pound boxes of chicken livers distributed to retail establishments.

He said they are only broiled to properly remove the blood, as required under kosher dietary law -- not to make them acceptable for consumption.

Instructions on the box indicate the product needs to be cooked thoroughly, he said.

"It must be prepared before it makes its way to the consumer," he said, adding that because of the "mishandling" they would revamp the product. "We certainly will not send it out as it is. In all probability we will send it out fully cooked."

The product is distributed to delis and other establishments, where it is sometimes chopped, repackaged and sold to customers.

Milworn said its other liver products are unaffected by the recall; they are sold fully cooked.

Health officials said of the 56 people sickened in New York City, 12 were hospitalized. The city Department of Health said it noticed a pattern of salmonella illnesses among those who had consumed kosher broiled chicken livers between February and November. It confirmed a link to the MealMart product using DNA technology.

SOURCE [1]

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