



Serial number 2019/028

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Event: Cluster of cases of listeriosis associated with sandwich products supplied to NHS organisations

Notified by: Tuberculosis, Acute Respiratory, Gastrointestinal, Emerging /Zoonotic Infections, and Travel and Migrant Health Division (TARGET), PHE National Infection Service

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PHE NIRP Level National – enhanced response

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Background and Interpretation:

This updates [BN 2019/024](#) on the ongoing investigation into the *Listeria monocytogenes* incident associated with sandwich products supplied to the NHS. There have been no new confirmed cases or deaths linked by whole genome sequencing to this incident since 14/06/2019; the number of confirmed cases remains at 9, of whom 5 have died. The evidence to date indicates that all confirmed cases ate the affected products in hospitals before the date of withdrawal of these products on 25th May. During this incident, a number of cases of listeriosis have been investigated and, based on the WGS profile, ruled out as a part of the outbreak.

The sandwich production company, following initial closure, has now gone into voluntary liquidation. The implicated meat supplier remains closed. No product from these two companies was distributed after 6 June and food safety action, including withdrawal of longer shelf life products that were still in circulation, has been undertaken. However, since the incubation period for *Listeria* can be up to 70 days, additional cases associated with this incident may still be identified.

A letter was sent on 19 June to Directors of Public Health and Directors of Adult Social Care and Children providing an update on the situation, drawing attention to the distribution chains beyond NHS establishments and reminding them of the guidance for health and social care organisations on reducing the risk of vulnerable groups contracting listeriosis. Included in the correspondence was a list of establishments with vulnerable people in their area known to have been supplied by the businesses linked to the supply chain of the outbreak. No further action was anticipated in the letters. The FSA sent out further correspondence to LAs on 27 June highlighting ten longer shelf life products supplied by North Country Quality Foods that may require further investigation and requesting that LAs contact the FSA about product sampling for these products.

As part of routine surveillance work, separate investigations are being undertaken for cases not associated with this incident and, as is standard practice, PHE will continue to analyse all samples that are sent to the National Infection Service laboratories.

There are currently no associated cases identified outside healthcare organisations; any risk to the public remains low. An updated media statement with links to further information and guidance on *Listeria* was issued on 26 June ([here](#)).

Implications for NHS organisations

NHS organisations should ensure relevant clinicians are aware of this information and the guidance on reducing the risk of vulnerable groups contracting listeriosis is reviewed ([here](#)). Media attention may result in queries from patients and staff. NHS organisations who require information in addition to this briefing should contact their local Health Protection Teams. NHS microbiology laboratories are reminded to refer all new *Listeria* isolates (not samples) to the Gastrointestinal Bacterial Reference Unit at PHE Colindale urgently.



Implications for PHE Centres

PHE Centres are asked to continue to support the investigation of new cases in their area, to help ensure that all presumptive *L. monocytogenes* isolates are referred to GBRU and that the standard enhanced *Listeria* questionnaire is completed and sent to the Gastrointestinal Infections Department at Listeria@phe.gov.uk. For any new cases that are linked to this cluster following WGS, please use the congregation **Listeria cluster 1/2a CC8 t5:308 2019** which has been created for this incident. Support from the NICC, including from the comms cell, can be accessed through opsroom.colindale@phe.gov.uk. Any NHS operational calls should be directed to NHSE/I.

Implications and recommendations for local authorities

Local authorities may be asked to assist with the investigation of listeriosis cases linked to this cluster or to investigate food premises that are part of the implicated food supply chain; this may involve taking food and environmental samples. Where required, the FSA will contact the relevant local authority directly. Local authorities are reminded that any samples submitted to the laboratory should have the **incident identification number ICID00034654** clearly marked on the sample request form.
