

RI Meatpacker Recalls 1.24 Million Pounds Of Salami

BURRILLVILLE, R.I. (AP) — A Rhode Island meat company recalled 1.24 million pounds of pepper-coated salami on Saturday, after officials conducting a months-long, multistate investigation of a salmonella outbreak compared shopping receipts of those who got sick.

The recall by Daniele International Inc. comes amid an outbreak that's sickened 184 people in 38 states since July.

Daniele has been identified as the source of the ongoing outbreak by William Keene, a senior epidemiologist at the public health division in Oregon, where eight people have gotten sick.

Keene said Saturday that the cause of the sickness was difficult to track and some questions remain, such as whether it was the meat or the pepper that was contaminated.

Public health investigators in Washington state found that many of the state's 14 residents who got sick shopped at the warehouse retailer Costco, Keene said.

Costco did not immediately return messages from The Associated Press seeking comment Saturday, but it has posted notice of Daniele's recall on its Web site.

With permission from the patients, Keene said, investigators compared their shopping records.

"There was one product that jumped out," he said: Daniele's. "That gave us the focus on salami."

So, Keene said, investigators re-interviewed people who were thought to be part of the outbreak, such as members of a hunting party from the South who had been to the Great Plains and responded to new questions with answers such as, "Now that you mention it, we did stop at a Wal-Mart in South Dakota and buy some salami."

But Daniele spokesman Jason Maloni said "there's no evidence that points to us" as the source.

Maloni said 11 people who got sick ate salami from the Daniele Italian Brand Gourmet Pack, but that Rhode Island and federal officials have not linked the company's products with the outbreak.

"We're taking the prudent step in the event that further evidence does point to us,"

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he said of the recall. "It is our responsibility to take this aggressive step."

In Washington, officials are monitoring the situation, said Tim Church, spokesman for the state Department of Health.

One person from Washington was hospitalized, but all have recovered, Church said.

"We know investigations have implicated salami nationally, but that's really all we know. There's more work that needs to be done on this," Church said.

Maloni said two of the Daniele's three plants have been tested and found free of the bacteria. Additional testing is planned.

"Our goal right now is to take prudent, proactive measures to do everything possible to remove any products that do not meet our high standards for quality and taste," Daniele Inc.'s vice president of sales, Davide Dukceovich, said in a statement.

The company has set up a hot line for consumers or distributors at (888) 345-4160.

Eating food contaminated with salmonella can cause salmonellosis, a potentially life-threatening bacterial foodborne illness.

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