

FDA: Iowa Company's Eggs OK To Sell After Recall

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of two Iowa farms that recalled millions of eggs this summer will start shipping its products to stores again, but the second farm could be shut down if it doesn't clean up, the Food and Drug Administration said Monday.

In an Oct. 15 letter to Hillandale Farms the FDA said the company has adequately cleaned up its facilities after it was linked to 1,600 salmonella illnesses earlier this year.

The FDA said an additional inspection of Hillandale this month showed no evidence of salmonella in the laying houses that are open for business. Four other houses at the farms are undergoing further testing before they can be reopened, the FDA said. The company has also committed to do more frequent testing for salmonella.

A spokeswoman for Hillandale, Julie DeYoung, said the company began shipping eggs Monday.

The FDA letter to Wright County Egg's owner, Austin "Jack" DeCoster, urged him to take "prompt and aggressive actions" to eliminate salmonella from his farms. The FDA said it will reinspect the farm and could seize products or shut down the company if corrective action hasn't been taken.

Wright County Egg supplied chickens and feed to Hillandale Farms, and FDA inspections after the recall showed far more violations there than at Hillandale, though samples of salmonella were found at both farms. Wright recalled 380 million eggs and Hillandale recalled 170 million.

At a congressional hearing last month, DeCoster said he was horrified to learn that his products might have been the cause of the illnesses. The chief executive of Hillandale, Orland Bethel, cited his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination and did not answer questions.

Inspections by the FDA in August of both farms showed dead chickens, insects, rodents and towers of manure. The companies have not been allowed to sell shell eggs since the salmonella was linked to the farms in August, except to breaker facilities that pasteurized the eggs.

Wright County Egg spokeswoman Hinda Mitchell said the company has responded swiftly and "had expeditious completion of the issues that were raised."

"We continue to cooperate fully with FDA and will respond to this letter accordingly," Mitchell said.

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