

Canned pork from Vietnam banned

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A can of pork liver paste imported from Vietnam that tested positive for African swine fever is pictured in an undated photograph.

Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine

To keep African swine fever at bay, Taiwan has banned imports of canned pork products from Vietnam, after a can of food from the Southeast Asian country tested positive for the virus earlier this month, the Council of Agriculture said yesterday.

The council made the announcement at a news conference in Taipei after a meeting of the Central Emergency Operation Center for preventing swine fever.

The council on Dec. 9 confirmed that a can of pig liver paste from Vietnam tested positive for the virus and immediately informed the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Council of Agriculture Minister Chen Chi-chung (陳其南) said, adding that it was one of 15 products tested.

As canned foods are disinfected at high temperatures, the risk of transmitting the virus is very low, he said.

However, even when the virus is killed during disinfection, its nucleic acid can still be detected in a product, said Tsai Shu-chen (蔡淑珍), director of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Division.

The ban on imports of canned pork products from Vietnam was put in place on Tuesday last

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week, after the FDA completed the relevant paperwork and informed affected businesses, she said.

As of Wednesday last week, the FDA had recalled 529 cans of the product, mainly for consumers' peace of mind, instead of concern over food security or disease transmission, she said.

Since China reported its first outbreak of African swine fever in August last year, the disease has spread to 10 other Asian countries — Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, North Korea, the Philippines, South Korea, East Timor and Vietnam — as well as Africa and Europe, council data showed.

As the Lunar New Year holiday is next month, officials have increased inspections at ports and international airports to ensure that officials check inbound luggage and parcels to prevent illegal imports of pork, Chen said.

People caught attempting to carry banned pork products through customs would face a fine of NT\$200,000 (US\$6,622) for a first offense and NT\$1 million for repeat offenses. Foreigners who fail to pay the fine at customs would not be allowed into Taiwan.

From Dec. 13, e-commerce platforms have been required to add warnings for foreign meat products and check if those products have undergone necessary quarantine procedures, the council said, adding that they face a fine of NT\$30,000 to NT\$150,000 if caught breaching regulations.

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