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Salmonellosis outbreak prompts alfalfa sprout recall

Oregon State Public Health Division and Oregon Department of Agriculture officials today announced a recall of Sprouter's Northwest brand alfalfa sprouts due to a Salmonellosis outbreak. Also, Public Health officials said that while most cases of salmonellosis do not require medical treatment, people who have eaten sprouts and develop severe symptoms should check with their doctors.

"These alfalfa sprouts have been identified as the cause of an ongoing outbreak of salmonellosis," said Dr. Paul Cieslak, an epidemiologist with the Oregon Department of Human Services State Public Health Division. "Consumers who have them in their refrigerators should discard them immediately and if you develop severe symptoms call your doctor. "

As of Tuesday, 13 outbreak cases had been identified in Oregon and Washington. All cases reported becoming ill since August 1, 2008.

The recalled sprouts were distributed through a number of wholesalers to grocery stores, restaurants, and other retail outlets in Oregon and Washington.

The recalled sprouts were sold in packages labeled "alfalfa sprouts," "salad sprouts" or "onion sprouts" or were sold as mixed sizes.

"Sprouter's Northwest has agreed to voluntarily recall its alfalfa sprouts and is cooperating fully with our ongoing investigation," Dr. Cieslak said.

State and federal agencies are working with the Kent, Wash.-based grower to remove potentially contaminated sprouts from distribution. Retailers and wholesalers who hold any of the recalled sprouts should segregate them from other produce and contact their suppliers for additional information. Restaurant and delicatessen operators should check their stock immediately to identify and pull any of the recalled products.

Salmonellosis is an acute bacterial infection that can cause diarrhea, fever, and vomiting. Symptoms usually develop within one to five days after eating contaminated food. Most cases resolve without the need for medical attention, and antibiotics are not recommended for persons with uncomplicated diarrheal illness. The risk of severe illness is particularly high among the elderly, the immunocompromised, and the very young,

People who have eaten sprouts and developed severe symptoms should discuss this exposure with their doctor. Some persons with salmonellosis develop serious illness that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

Raw sprouts have been repeatedly identified as the cause of outbreaks of salmonellosis, Escherichia coli O157:H7 infections, and other diseases. This is at least the seventh sprout-caused outbreak that has sickened Oregonians since 1996.

The following is a list of package sizes of the affected Sprouters Northwest, Inc., products:

- Alfalfa Sprouts 5-ounce cup
- Alfalfa Sprouts 4-ounce clamshell
- Salad Sprouts 5-ounce cup
- Salad Sprouts 4-ounce clamshell
- Onion Sprouts 5-ounce cup
- Onion Sprouts 4-ounce clamshell
- Alfalfa Sprouts 1-pound bag
- Alfalfa Sprouts 2-pound tray

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