

Layoffs At Beef Plant End Inspections

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The Canadian Press

OTTAWA - The federal government and the meat processing company at the centre of an E. coli outbreak appear to have wound up in a game of chicken.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) review of the processing at XL Foods ground to a halt this weekend when the firm announced it was temporarily laying off 2,000 workers.

It blamed the decision on the fact the federal government hadn't given it a firm date for when it would get its license back in order to fully resume operations.

A spokesman for the inspection agency says the inspectors had no choice but to leave the facility because there's no work for them to observe.

The CFIA said its first priority is the safety of food for consumers, and it won't give XL its seal of approval until it can complete its review.

An E.coli contamination that originated at the Brooks, Alta. plant has been linked to 15 illnesses, and spurred a recall of its products from across North America.

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