

EU Calls for Emergency Meat Testing

RAF CASERT, Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union nations on Wednesday called for more intensive testing for a month to try to contain the scandal in which horsemeat was sold as beef.

The emergency meeting at EU headquarters included nations most affected by the horsemeat scandal that has swept through Europe, with millions of burgers and frozen meals recalled across the continent.

Ireland's Agriculture Minister Simon Coveney suggested the scandal would likely spread further as more countries test beef.

Germany said Wednesday it had received a shipment of tainted frozen meals and Norway pulled products from its stores.

Ireland found horsemeat in burgers last month after routine testing.

"Once we got the positive test and the investigation was under way, obviously other countries followed suit," said Coveney, who chaired the meeting. "As they tested they found that the problem has been getting bigger and bigger."

The nations also proposed that investigations in Ireland, France, the Netherlands and other nations should now be coordinated by the EU's Europol law enforcement agency.

□ "What was clear, was the absolute unity of purpose of the member states to get to the bottom of this," said Britain's Environment Secretary Owen Paterson. "We do not know exactly what has gone wrong."

The testing proposal envisions requiring EU members to test 6,500 beef samples for traces of horsemeat and a harmful equine medicine known as Bute during the month of March. Results would be announced April 15.

The plan will now be considered at a specially called meeting of food and animal health experts on Friday, when the 27 member states are expected to back the call.

Representatives of Britain, Ireland, France, Romania, Poland, Luxembourg and Sweden attended Wednesday's meeting.

In Britain and Ireland there is great sensitivity about eating horse, but that does not exist in other EU nations like France and Belgium.

Germany's agriculture and consumer protection ministry said a shipment of frozen lasagna containing horsemeat was delivered to at least one trader in western

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Germany.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority spokesman Kenneth Vikse said Wednesday that leading store chains, Findus and other producers had recalled processed products. Earlier Wednesday, small supermarket chains in neighboring Denmark withdrew lasagna products.

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