Nestle Finds Horsemeat in Pasta Meals

BERLIN (AP) — The world's biggest food and drinks maker Nestle SA has become the latest company to pull some of its products off European shelves after they were found to contain undeclared horse meat.

The company, based in Vevey, Switzerland, said in a statement late Monday that it withdrew some of its beef pasta ready meals from sale after tests conducted two days earlier detected horse DNA. Nestle said it increased its surveillance after reports emerged last month of mislabeled products being sold in Britain.

"Our tests have found traces of horse DNA in two products made from beef supplied by H.J. Schypke," Nestle said in a statement. "The levels found are above the one percent threshold the U.K.'s Food Safety Agency uses to indicate likely adulteration or gross negligence."

H.J. Schypke, a German subcontractor for one of Nestle's suppliers, Belgium-based JBS Toledo N.V., said in a statement Tuesday that it had never knowingly procured horse meat.

"We regret this incident and will intensify our efforts to provide the highest quality products," it said. "As a result, we will conduct genetic tests on all raw incoming meat in future."

Nestle insisted that the Buitoni Beef Ravioli and Beef Tortellini meals sent to Italy and Spain, and frozen meat sold as Lasagnes à la Bolognaise Gourmandes to catering businesses in France, were safe to consume.

Other Nestle food brands, such as Stouffer's, Lean Cuisine and Gerber baby foods, weren't affected.

Speaking to reporters at the company's full-year results presentation last week, Nestle's chief executive officer, Paul Bulcke, said reports that horse meat had found its way into food products in Europe had adversely affected the entire global food industry but his company had "very stringent and very disciplined policies with our suppliers" to prevent contaminants from entering its products.

"Also quality has a price," Bulcke said. "So that is why we sometimes are a little bit more expensive, maybe, because these things, they cost money."

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