

FDA Shuts Down NY Cheese Maker for Listeria Contamination

SILVER SPRING, Md. (FDA) — On April 28, 2014, United States District Court Judge Richard J. Arcara of the Western District of New York entered a consent decree of permanent injunction between the United States and Finger Lakes Farmstead Cheese Company, LLC, of Trumansburg, N.Y. and its co-owner Nancy Taber Richards. The consent decree was pursued by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York on behalf of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Under the consent decree, Finger Lakes, the manufacturer and distributor of raw cow's milk cheese, cannot receive, prepare, process, pack, hold or distribute food until it demonstrates that it has developed a control program to eliminate *Listeria monocytogenes* from its production facility and products. *Listeria monocytogenes* is a foodborne pathogen that can cause serious illness and death.

The company must, among other actions, hire an independent laboratory to collect and analyze samples for the presence of *Listeria*; retain an independent sanitation expert; develop a program to control *Listeria* in the production facility and to train employees on sanitary food handling; and destroy all food items currently in the facility. Should the company be permitted to resume operations, the FDA may require the company to recall products or cease production if future violations occur.

"The FDA repeatedly advised the company and its owner of the insanitary conditions at the facility," said Melinda K. Plaisier, the FDA's associate commissioner for regulatory affairs. "When a company continues to produce food that presents a risk for consumers, the FDA will take regulatory action to protect the public's health."

FDA inspections since 2012 have documented serious deficiencies in the company's processing facility. The FDA issued a warning letter to the company in October 2012. In addition, FDA laboratory testing in 2012 and 2013 found *Listeria monocytogenes* in Finger Lakes' finished cheese products and in its facility.

Listeriosis, the illness caused by *Listeria monocytogenes*, can cause serious illness and potentially cause fatal infections especially in young children, frail or older people, and others with weakened immune systems. Although healthy individuals may experience only short-term symptoms, such as high fever, severe headache, stiffness, nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhea, listeriosis in pregnant women can cause miscarriage and stillbirth.

Although no illnesses have been reported from the consumption of Finger Lakes' products, individuals who have eaten these products and experience any of the symptoms of listeriosis, listed above, should contact their health care professional. Consumers can [report](#) [1] problems with FDA-regulated products to their district

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office consumer complaint coordinator.

For more information:

- October 23, 2012 [Warning Letter](#) [2]
- [FoodSafety.gov on Listeria](#) [3]

The FDA, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, protects the public health by assuring the safety, effectiveness, and security of human and veterinary drugs, vaccines and other biological products for human use, and medical devices. The agency also is responsible for the safety and security of our nation's food supply, cosmetics, dietary supplements, products that give off electronic radiation, and for regulating tobacco products.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ConsumerComplaintCoordinators/default.htm>

[2]

<http://www.fda.gov/iceci/enforcementactions/warningletters/2012/ucm325714.htm>

[3] <http://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/causes/bacteriaviruses/listeria/>