IN BELGIUM

Listeria in imported fish

The Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (AFSCA/FAAV) communicated on January 16 that several lots of salmon imported from France may be contaminated with the pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes*. This contamination concerns lots of raw salmon and salted aromatized salmon manufactured by the agency FRIAMER; some of them have been sold to Belgian supermarkets. The concerned lots have been withdrawn from the market and the French authorities have suspended the manufacturer production.

Any person who has consumed fish from the specified lots (see AFSCA/FAAV website below mentioned) should consult a doctor in case of fever and headache. Listeriosis manifests as meningo-encephalitis and/or septicemia. The onset may be sudden, with fever, intense headache, nausea and vomiting, but may also be subacute in immunocompromised hosts. It may also occur as an acute mild febrile infection. The incubation period of listeria infection may go up to 8 weeks. Persons at higher risk are pregnant women as infection may lead to serious damage to the fetus and sometimes abortion, even in asymptomatic mothers. Listeria infection is under mandatory notification in Vlaanderen only but may also be reported to the French Community.

In Belgium, an average of 50 cases is reported by the sentinel and reference laboratories each year. In the first 3 weeks of 2003, the IPH Reference Laboratory received 3 human isolates of an uncommon listeria sub-group (serovar 4b), compared with only 4 cases for the whole year 2002 and no case in November and December 2002. The Laboratory has requested to the French authorities information on the listeria serovar of the contaminated salmon.

Sources: AFSCA, Press release from January 16, 2003 on www.afsca.be, G. Ducoffre for the IPH sentinel laboratory network (http://www.iph.fgov.be/epidemio/epien/) and Dr M. Yde for the Listeria National Reference Laboratory (www.iph.fgov.be/bacterio/lis.htm). Follow up at the IPH: Dr G. Marchant (epidemiology) and Dr M. Yde for the Reference Laboratory.

IN EUROPE

Northern Italy starts meningitis vaccine campaign

Health authorities in northern Italy announced on January 8 2003, the start of a mass vaccination program against meningitis, after an upsurge of the disease in Lombardy. The program, due to begin 20 Jan 2003, is the first mass vaccination against meningitis ever
carried out in Italy. The meningitis C vaccination is recommended for about 10,000 children and teenagers who live in the area around Magenta, a village 6 kilometres from Milan.

Despite the launch of a meningitis vaccination campaign in September 2002 in Lombardy, 6 cases of bacterial meningitis have been recorded in Magenta and the surrounding area in 45 days. Local health authorities will monitor the efficacy of the treatment by following the vaccinated individuals until 2007. Source: http://www.promedmail.org

### IN THE REST OF THE WORLD

**Yellow fever alerts: Colombia, Brazil, Guinea**

In Brazil, the Minas Gerais State is on alert due to an outbreak of yellow fever. From 25 Dec 2002 up to January 16 2003, 26 suspected cases of yellow fever have been notified and 5 cases have died in the city of Lucas. Most cases were young farmers. Teams of specialists have been sent to the region to conduct vaccination of the population and to try to identify new cases. Six blood samples were analyzed by the state referral laboratory and 4 came out positive. The last yellow fever outbreak in Minas Gerais state occurred in 2001, in the mid-west region of the state, with 32 reported cases and 16 deaths.

Although Brazil only recommends, and does not require, yellow fever vaccination of visitors to the endemic areas, it is advisable for travelers to be vaccinated.

In Columbia, the Ministry of Health has declared an alert in the departments of Meta & Guaviare in the face of outbreaks of yellow fever. No further details are yet available.

In Macenta, Guinea, WHO reports 11 cases of yellow fever with 6 deaths occurring in the period ending 31 Dec 2002.