

## **New development in MPI's berry investigation**

9 December 2015

A newly notified case of Hepatitis A is likely to be linked to the consumption of the Fruzio Mixed Berries product, which is currently the subject of an MPI-directed product recall.

If confirmed, the development would bring the number of people who have contracted Hepatitis A after eating the Fruzio Mixed Berries product to five, says MPI's director of plant food and environment Peter Thomson.

"MPI was alerted to the case yesterday evening, following an investigation by the Ministry of Health and Environmental Science and Research (ESR).

"In the new case, the person ate the berries in late October and reported symptoms at the beginning of this month. The person was briefly hospitalised for observation, but released the same day.

"The next step is to have the virus tested to see if it is the same strain as that in the four other Hepatitis A cases. The Ministry of Health is working on this now and expects results at the end of this week or early next week."

Mr Thomson said MPI has an extensive investigation and work programme underway in relation to frozen berries.

"A key focus of this is our continuing forensic examination of the supply chain. Last week we established an increased surveillance programme, including testing imported frozen berries at the border.

"Given the incubation period can be between 15-50 days, it is not unexpected that a new case of Hepatitis A potentially linked to these berries has been notified.

"In the meantime, our advice about all other imported frozen berries stays the same. People should wash their hands before eating and preparing food. Anyone who is concerned should briefly boil any imported frozen berries before eating them, or ensure cooking exceeds 85 degrees Celsius for one minute.

"Elderly persons and those with chronic liver damage should avoid imported frozen berries that have not been heat treated.

People concerned about a potential risk to your health, or the health of others, should seek advice from their medical practitioner, or call the Ministry of Health's Healthline – 0800 61 11 16.

People concerned about the safety of food products should contact the MPI consumer helpline (0800 00 83 33).

ENDS

**Products under recall:**

- Fruzio Mixed Berries 1kg and 500g products, which contains strawberries and blackberries
- Fruzio IQF Strawberry 1kg
- Fruzio IQF Blackberry 1kg
- Fruzio IQF 3 Mixed Berry 1kg (blackberries, strawberries and blueberries).

**Investigation timeline:**

**Late October – early November, 2015** – Four people reported getting sick with Hepatitis A.

**Friday 20 November, 2015** – Ministry of Health informs MPI of a potential link between the 4 cases of Hepatitis A to consumption of food.

**Monday 30 November, 2015** – MPI's investigation progresses to the point where it identifies a risk of Hepatitis A associated with imported frozen berries. MPI issues a statement advising consumers of the risk, and plans to increase its surveillance and testing of imported frozen berries.

**Wednesday 2 December, 2015** – MPI institutes testing of imported frozen berries at the border as part of a wider surveillance programme. It continues investigations into the genetic makeup of the virus and an examination of the supply chain.

**Thursday 3 December, 2015** – MPI receives new genetic evidence about the virus and a continued examination of the supply chain allows MPI to direct FSL Foods to recall its Fruzio Mixed Berries product.

**Friday 4 December, 2015** – FSL Foods chooses to voluntarily recall further products to provide extra assurance to its customers.

**Wednesday 9 December 2015** – A newly notified case of Hepatitis A is likely to be linked to the consumption of the Fruzio Mixed Berries product.