



22 May 2009

QH investigates possible contamination of semi-dried tomatoes

Please attribute the following comments to acting Deputy Director-General (Division of the Chief Health Officer) Dr Aaron Groves.

Queensland Health is assisting with a national investigation into the possible link between semi-dried tomatoes and a recent increase in cases of Hepatitis A.

South Australian health authorities have identified a link between Hepatitis A and the consumption of semi-dried tomatoes sourced from a specific wholesaler, Siena Foods.

This wholesaler sources semi-dried tomatoes from a number of suppliers, including a supplier in Queensland and others in Victoria.

Today, Queensland Health has conducted an extensive inspection, together with the local government authority, of the supplier in Queensland. This inspection did not identify any current areas of concern.

We will continue to work closely with South Australian, Victorian and other health authorities to accurately identify the possible source of the hepatitis outbreak.

South Australian health authorities stated that they have strong evidence that semi-dried tomatoes in oil with herbs and garlic sold by Siena Foods in South Australia should not be consumed.

Initial advice is that the wholesaler does not distribute this product in Queensland.

None the less, Queensland Health supports the advice of the South Australian health authorities that semi-dried tomatoes in oil with herbs and garlic from Siena Foods should not be consumed. The warning does not apply to semi-dried tomatoes sold in jars, pre-packaged or vacuum packaged.

Hepatitis A is a notifiable disease, which allows us to closely monitor and track its spread within our community. This allows us to investigate cases and prevent further spread.

Ten cases of locally acquired hepatitis A have been reported in Queensland since 1 April 2009 and, while this is a relatively low number, these cases are being followed up.

Hepatitis A may cause abdominal pain, fatigue, fever, discoloration of urine and a yellowing of the skin known as jaundice. Good hand and food hygiene prevents the further spread of this disease.

More information about Hepatitis A can be found on the Queensland Health website at

http://access.health.qld.gov.au/hid/InfectionsandParasites/ViralInfections/hepatitisA_fs.asp