

DVMs for distribution

Border Inspection Posts (England) – for action  
Chief Port Health Officers & Nominated Officers for  
imported Food (England) – for action

cc: APHA  
CIEH  
LGGPT  
APA  
Trading Standards Institute  
Public Health England

12 March 2015

Reference: OVS/2015/14

## **BIVALVE MOLLUSCS FROM VIETNAM**

This letter concerns norovirus being found in imported bivalve molluscs from Vietnam.

At a recent meeting, the Commission talked about reinforced checks triggered by Member States, under Article 24 of Directive 1997/98, in relation to frozen boiled clams from Vietnam.

Vietnam can only export clams which have been processed. However, it is not straight forward to check whether these clams have been properly processed. The FVO visited Vietnam last year and found that temperature standards were not always compiled with and also detected norovirus in some consignments.

The current detection method used for norovirus is polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which does not allow live viruses and fragments of (dead) norovirus to be distinguished. Therefore, when detecting live clams it is difficult to differentiate whether the norovirus is live.

Imports should be only authorised for processed bivalve molluscs when additional information about processing is provided. Questions should be asked on the processing procedure. If appropriate information on the procedure is not provided, it could be considered as ground for rejection.

Under Regulation 853/2004, Annex III, Section VII, Chapter II, bivalve molluscs must be immersed in boiling water for the period



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required to raise the internal temperature of the mollusc flesh to a minimum of 90°C and maintain this temperature for not less than 90 seconds.

If norovirus is detected in unprocessed molluscs, the consignment should not be imported and RASFF should be raised.

Yours sincerely

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