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Update on the new product testing protocol for horsemeat

12th February 2013

Dear Customer

I am writing to update you on the extra steps 3663 are taking to ensure you can remain confident in the products you buy from us.

Following a number of meetings between industry representatives, the FSA and DEFRA, we are now able to confirm that we will be taking the following actions on product testing for the presence of horsemeat:

1. We will be submitting all tests already conducted for the presence of horsemeat to the FSA this week. To date all of the tests we have carried out for the presence of horsemeat have proved to be negative.
2. We will be sending all 3663 own brand products that contain chopped and/or minced (comminuted) beef as an ingredient for testing today. This is in line with the new FSA recommendation on the specific types of products that the food industry should focus testing on to check for the presence of horsemeat. Tests will be conducted using methodology as recommended by the FSA. We anticipate getting these results back by the end of February which is also in line with the revised FSA timescales.
3. In addition to a letter sent last week to our suppliers informing them of our updated Adulteration and Claims Testing Policy, today we will be informing all suppliers of branded comminuted beef products, in line with their responsibilities as the brand owner, to:
 - Ensure they test all comminuted beef products they supply us for horsemeat in line with the new FSA requirements. We will be expecting them to complete this testing over the next four weeks.

- Give assurance that the products they are supplying us do not contain any undeclared meats and are in line with the ingredients declaration supplied with the products. This is already a core requirement for all suppliers of 3663 but given the current industry concerns over horsemeat contamination we want to re-affirm this point with suppliers of processed beef products.

4. We already test our own brand meat products for a range of meat species and in light of the recent events and the new FSA guidelines issued this week horsemeat is one of the meat species that we will test for going forward.

Within 3663 we supply over 200 different comminuted beef products both branded and own label and in line with FSA requirements these must be our focus at the present time. We will of course review the need to test further products following the results of this first phase of testing and any changing requirements from the FSA.

Having already conducted extensive checks across our range and our suppliers we can still assure you we do not have any direct links with the sources already mentioned in the media for the presence of horsemeat in the food chain.

As a major national distributor of both branded and own label to the industry, 3663 invests heavily in Quality Assurance to do our utmost to protect the integrity of our product range. It is made clear to every supplier that products supplied to 3663 should only include declared ingredients.

As you will appreciate this evolving situation is an industry-wide issue and we will continue to monitor events and maintain our dialogue with all our customers, suppliers, the FSA and the BRC. We are committed to keeping our customers informed and taking prompt actions should any of these issues have any implications for the integrity of goods sold by 3663.

Yours faithfully

Andy Kemp
Group Sales Director