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S.C. LIVESTOCK INSPECTORS RESPOND TO HOG-FEED CONTAMINATION

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Livestock and Poultry Health (LPH) officials are investigating if hogs were given feed potentially contaminated with melamine. Restrictions and quarantines have been implemented. Surveillance is on going. The priority is protecting the public.

“We have identified one farm with approximately 800 hogs that may have been exposed to the feed,” said Tony Caver, state veterinarian. “The animals have been placed under movement restrictions while we test them. All the hogs are healthy.”

Inspectors also have been coordinating efforts with North Carolina, which shipped some hogs to South Carolina for processing. Fifty-two hogs from North Carolina have been quarantined at a state inspected plant.

“We are working with other states and the FDA and Food Safety and Inspection Service,” said Caver. “We are sharing information and researching the impact on the food supply.”

State livestock inspectors began their investigation late last week when notified by the FDA and South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA). The potentially contaminated feed was bought as salvage pet food from Diamond Pet Foods Inc., which received contaminated wheat gluten and rice protein concentrate from China.

LPH, USDA and SCDA personnel were dispatched to the farm. The potentially affected feed was identified. Feed and urine samples were collected for testing. Feed samples from the farm were found to be negative for melamine contamination by the FDA in Atlanta. The FDA reported extremely low doses of melamine were detected in the urine.

“No one has determined the significance of finding any detectable level of melamine in healthy hogs,” said Caver. “As a precaution we will keep the hogs under movement restriction.”

State officials are waiting for guidance from the FDA, FSIS, and EPA as to the significance of these tests and other pending tests.

Livestock and Poultry Health is a unit of Clemson University Public Service and Agriculture. The agency inspects and regulates the state meat and poultry industries.

For FDA information, contact Kathy McDermott at (301) 827-0857. For information from the Food Safety and Inspection Service contact Steve Cohen at (202) 720-9113.

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