

FDA Investigates a multi-state outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* linked to certain Crave Brothers Farmstead Classics Cheeses



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What was the Problem and What was Done?

The FDA, the CDC and state and local officials investigated a multi-state outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* infections (listeriosis) linked to Les Frères, Petit Frère, and Petit Frère with Truffles cheese distributed by Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company of Waterloo, Wisconsin.

On September 24, 2013, the **CDC reported that the outbreak appeared to be over** (<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/outbreaks/cheese-07-13/index.html>)  (<http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/AboutThisWebsite/WebsitePolicies/Disclaimers/default.htm>). A total of six people infected with the same strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* infection have been identified in five states.

- The number of ill persons identified in each state is as follows: Illinois (1), Indiana (1), Minnesota (2), Ohio (1), and Texas (1).
- Six ill people have reported being hospitalized, and one death has been reported.
- One illness in a pregnant women resulted in a miscarriage.

The pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) subtype of *Listeria monocytogenes*, or the bacteria's "DNA fingerprint," isolated from cases in the cluster were the same as isolates retrieved during 2010 and 2011 environmental sampling efforts by the FDA at Crave Brothers Farmstead Classics Cheese.

Laboratory tests conducted by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on samples of Les Frères and Petit Frère with Truffles cheeses made by Crave Brothers from two retail stores found *Listeria monocytogenes* with the same DNA fingerprint as the outbreak strain.

On July 3, 2013, **Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company recalled the following products** (</Safety/Recalls/ucm359621.htm>):

- Les Frères (LF225 2/2.5#) with a make date of 7-1-13 or prior, packaged in white plastic with a green and gold label.
- Petit Frère (PF88 8/8 oz) with a make date of 7-1-13 or prior, packaged in small round wooden boxes.
- Petit Frère with Truffles (PF88T 8/8 oz) with a make date of 7-1-13 or prior, packaged in small round wooden boxes.

These products were distributed nationwide through retail and foodservice outlets as well as by mail orders.

Additionally, on July 5, 2013, **Whole Foods Market announced a recall of Crave Brothers Les Frères cheese** (</Safety/Recalls/ucm359697.htm>) sold at Whole Foods Market stores.

Between July 2 and July 10, 2013, the FDA conducted an inspection at the firm's processing facility in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture. During that inspection, the FDA collected a sample of Petit Frère with Truffles that was found to contain *Listeria monocytogenes* with the same DNA fingerprint as the outbreak strain.

The firm is not currently in production and the FDA and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture are working closely to review the firm's corrective actions before the firm is authorized to resume cheese production.

What are the Symptoms of Listeriosis?

Listeriosis is a rare and serious illness caused by eating food contaminated with the bacteria called *Listeria monocytogenes*. Persons in a higher-risk category, including pregnant women, people with weakened immune systems, and older adults, who experience fever within 2 months after eating Les Frères, Petit Frère, and Petit Frère with Truffles cheeses manufactured by Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company, should seek medical care and tell the health care provider about eating the contaminated cheese.

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Who is at Risk?

Listeriosis can be fatal, especially in certain high-risk groups. These groups include older adults, and people with weakened immune systems and certain chronic medical conditions (such as cancer). In pregnant women, listeriosis can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature labor, and serious illness or death in newborn babies, though the mother herself rarely becomes seriously ill.

What Do Consumers Need To Do?

Consumers should not eat the following cheeses manufactured by Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company of Waterloo, Wisconsin:

- Crave Brothers Farmstead Classics Les Frères cheese
- Crave Brothers Farmstead Classics Petit Frère cheese
- Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Classics Petit Frère with Truffles cheese

Consumers should check their homes for these cheeses and discard them. According to Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company consumers may also return the cheese to the place of purchase for a full refund.

Recommendations for preventing listeriosis are available at the CDC Listeria website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html> (<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html>) 
<http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/AboutThisWebsite/WebsitePolicies/Disclaimers/default.htm>

Listeria monocytogenes can grow at refrigerator temperatures, about 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Celsius). The longer ready-to-eat refrigerated foods are stored in the refrigerator, the more opportunity *Listeria* has to grow.

It is very important that consumers thoroughly clean their refrigerators and other food preparation surfaces and cheese cutting utensils that may have come in contact with the contaminated cheese. Consumers should follow these simple steps:

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Wash the inside walls and shelves of the refrigerator, cutting boards and countertops; then sanitize them with a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach to one gallon of hot water; dry with a clean cloth or paper towel that has not been previously used.
- Wipe up spills in the refrigerator immediately and clean the refrigerator regularly.
- Always wash hands with warm water and soap following the cleaning and sanitization process.

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What Do Retailers and Restaurants Need To Do?

Do not sell or serve the recalled cheese. If you do not know the source of your cheese, check with your supplier.

- Dispose of the recalled cheese.
- Wash and sanitize cheese display cases and refrigerators where contaminated cheese was stored.
- Wash and sanitize cutting boards, surfaces, and utensils used to cut, serve, or store contaminated cheese.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap following the cleaning and sanitation process.

Retailers, restaurants, and other food service operators who have cut and packaged this cheese need to be concerned about cross contamination of cutting surfaces and utensils through contact with the recalled cheese. Regular frequent cleaning and sanitizing of cutting boards and utensils used in cutting may help to minimize the likelihood of cross-contamination.

Listeria monocytogenes can grow in cut cheese at room and refrigerator temperatures. *Listeria* can also spread to other cheeses cut and served on the same cutting board or stored in the same area. For that reason, retailers, restaurants, and other food service operators may wish to consider whether other cheeses available for sale could have been cross-contaminated from the recalled cheese and should be discarded.

Because *Listeria* can grow at refrigeration temperatures in foods like cheeses, the FDA recommends and many state codes require that cheeses be discarded within 7 days of the date that they are opened in a retail establishment.

See the FDA Bulletin, [\(/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm321727.htm\)](http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm321727.htm)
[Advice to Food Establishments that Sell or Repackage Cheese Products](http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm321727.htm)
[\(/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm321727.htm\)](http://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm321727.htm), for additional information.

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Who Should be Contacted?

Consumers with questions about the Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese Company recall may contact the company at 920-478-4887, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CDT.

Questions about the Whole Foods Market recall can call the company at 512-477-5566 ext. 20060, Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CDT.

The FDA encourages consumers with questions about food safety to call 1-888-SAFEFOOD Monday through Friday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Eastern time, or to consult the fda.gov website: www.fda.gov (<http://www.fda.gov>).

The information in this release reflects the FDA's best efforts to communicate what it has learned from the manufacturer and the state and local public health agencies involved in the investigation. The agency will update this page as more information becomes available.

For more information:

- CDC: Multistate Outbreak of Listeriosis Linked to Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheeses (<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/outbreaks/cheese-07-13/index.html>) 
(<http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/AboutThisWebsite/WebsitePolicies/Disclaimers/default.htm>)
- FoodSafety.gov on *Listeria* (<http://www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/causes/bacteriaviruses/listeria/index.html>)  (<http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/AboutThisWebsite/WebsitePolicies/Disclaimers/default.htm>)

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