

FSA welcomes UK ban on all feeder rodent imports from Lithuania used as pet food

The ban, imposed until further notice by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs comes after a joint investigation by UKHSA, FSA, DEFRA and APHA into an outbreak of salmonella affecting over 900 people in the UK.

The FSA and partners are continuing to urge people to be extra careful when handling any frozen rodents including mice product and packaging due to the risk of salmonella.

People should be extra vigilant, washing hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after contact, when handling not just the product, but their reptiles and associated equipment and environment, due to the risk of the illness.

[Further general advice on reducing the risk of contracting Salmonella](#) is available online.

Tina Potter, Head of Incidents at the Food Standards Agency said:

“As we have continued to see a rise in the number of cases of Salmonella Enteritidis linked to feeder rodents imported from Lithuania over the past number of months, we welcome Defra's move to ban these products from being imported and sold across the UK.

"Even though this ban has been introduced to ensure public health is protected, we cannot emphasise enough the importance of good hygiene practice when handling raw or frozen pet food, as well as the reptile itself.

"The feed should be suitably stored, ideally in a dedicated storage compartment or freezer, not in contact with human food and it should always be defrosted naturally at room temperature on newspaper or paper towels away from human food and food preparation surfaces. Any surfaces and equipment used should be thoroughly disinfected.

"Handlers and pet owners must always wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water immediately after handling the frozen and defrosted feed and handling your reptile and their equipment.”

Advice to reptile owners about feeding their pets

Snake owners and others using frozen mice as food may have concerns about maintaining their animal's welfare, as the import ban may cause short term shortages. There should be sufficient mice to maintain animal welfare for all snakes and other animals, including birds that need to be fed mice, if owners adapt their current feeding routines. [Detailed advice for reptile owners](#) will be published online.

Advice to parents and guardians of children handling reptiles

Children have been particularly affected so we are urging parents and guardians to make sure everyone washes their hands thoroughly with warm soapy water every time they handle and feed mice to their pets and handle their reptiles to reduce risk of becoming ill with Salmonella. Both the vivarium and the areas reptiles are able to roam could be contaminated with Salmonella. Good hygiene should be observed.

If you, or other family members become ill with symptoms such as diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fever, consult your doctor or NHS 111 and inform them that you own/keep a reptile. If you have symptoms, make sure you wash your hands regularly and avoid preparing food for others. Do not go to work or school until 48 hours after symptoms have passed to reduce the chances of passing on the infection.

Further information on [good hygiene practice when handling feeder mice](#) can be found on our website.