Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

CHIEF EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGED STATEMENT
UNDER SECTION 289 OF THE FOOD ACT 2014

Issued at Wellington at 1700 on 30 November 2015.

I, Martyn Dunne, Chief Executive of the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), for the purposes of protecting human life, public health and informing the public, issue the following statement under section 289 of the Food Act 2014:

MPI has been informed by the Ministry of Health (MoH) of four human cases of Hepatitis A thought to be linked to packaged imported frozen berries. While there is not sufficient information to initiate a targeted product recall, the evidence from the cases and from international experience indicates a risk of exposure to Hepatitis A from consuming imported frozen berries. MPI is developing increased testing mechanisms for imported frozen berries.

MPI has received information that the following types of imported berries, in frozen form, may pose a risk of Hepatitis A:

- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Boysenberries

All brands, batches and sizes of these products are subject to this risk and the associated advice.

Anyone concerned about potential risks to their health should briefly boil frozen berries before consuming them, or ensure cooking temperatures exceed 85 degrees Celsius for 1 minute. The virus is inactivated by temperatures above 85 degrees Celsius for 1 minute. Washing frozen berries will not inactivate the virus.

Frozen berries used to make smoothies and other drink or dessert products in cafes and restaurants are subject to the same risk and advice.

Elderly persons and those with chronic liver damage should avoid frozen berries that have not been heat treated.

General advice about food safety still applies. People should wash their hands before eating and preparing food.

For more information on Hepatitis A and food safety advice, refer to the MPI website www.mpi.govt.nz and the MoH website www.health.govt.nz.

MPI is working with suppliers to ensure they are aware of upcoming new testing requirements. Additional testing of potentially affected products may result in additional statements.

If you have any concerns about these products, please call MPI's consumer helpline on 0800 008 333. If you have any health concerns please seek medical advice, see your GP or call Healthline 0800 611 116.

Martyn Dunne
Chief Executive
Ministry for Primary Industries

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