

Pork DNA found in Halal chicken sausages that have been served to primary school children

- **Westminster Council confirmed pork was found in the sausages**
- **At least one school served the contaminated meat to schoolchildren**
- **The council did tests in wake of horsemeat scandal**
- **Defra called find 'totally unacceptable'**
- **Aldi also announces frozen meatloaf found to contain horse meat**

By Sam Webb

Contaminant: Westminster Council has removed a food supplier after it was discovered that pork DNA was discovered in Halal chicken sausages that were eaten by pupils. File picture

Pork DNA has been found in Halal chicken sausages that have been served in at least one primary school, Westminster Council said today.

Other tests revealed that lean minced beef supplied to the council showed evidence of lamb and pork DNA.

The council said it immediately ensured both items were removed from all school menus and had instructed its contractor to temporarily cease supplying meat until the issue was resolved.

The consumption of pork is forbidden under Islamic law.

Westminster City Council have named the school involved as St Mary's Bryanston Square, a Church of England school in west London.

In the meantime, the council said it had asked its contractor to no longer use its Halal meat supplier.

The problem came to light after the authority decided to carry out its own proactive tests on food contamination in the wake of the horse meat scandal.

The council said officers took seven samples in total from three schools in the week beginning February 25, adding that the tests 'were carried out on our own initiative and not carried out as the result of any specific concerns about school food standards'.

The testing, which involved analysis for the presence of DNA from beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, goat and horse, all proved negative for horse DNA.

However, a preliminary report received on Friday suggested pig DNA could be present in the Halal chicken sausages range. The result was found in one sample taken at a Westminster primary school.

A further round of tests today confirmed the preliminary findings.

The Halal sausages were a menu choice in 15 primary schools, two nurseries, one special school and one pupil referral unit, all of which took Halal-only meat. The lean minced beef was used in 18 schools.

The authority said it had launched its own investigation to establish how the contamination arose.

Westminster City Council's tri-borough director of children's services Andrew Christie said: 'We are very concerned by the discovery that a contractor has fallen short of the high standards we demand.'

St Mary's Bryanston Square Primary School, where the chicken Halal sausages containing pork DNA were served

We also understand and regret the upset that may have been caused to parents and children alike. We are contacting schools, parents and faith group leaders and are offering to meet them to discuss their concerns.

'Westminster City Council took prompt action when this issue came to light and immediately ensured this product stopped being served in the schools in question. We have asked our contractor Chartwells to no longer use the meat supplier involved.'

'The discovery of pork in these sausages came about because of extra tests Westminster City Council decided to carry out. The results were all the more shocking given the assurances about the food we receive from our suppliers.'

Other tests revealed that lean minced beef supplied to Westminster Council showed evidence of lamb and pork DNA. File picture

'I can assure parents we will keep testing our school meals.'

The council said it alerted the Food Standards Agency on March 11 in accordance with the usual protocols for incidents of this kind.

A Defra spokesperson said: 'It is totally unacceptable if food labelled as Halal has been found to contain pork.'

'Today Defra, the Food Standards Agency, and DCLG met with organisations involved in Halal and Kosher food to discuss labelling, and certification.

Tesco Everyday Value beef burgers were removed after it was discovered they contained horse meat

'Food manufacturers and suppliers have a responsibility to make sure that the food they serve is what they say it is. The FSA is working with Westminster City Council to establish what happened.'

Last month the Ministry of Justice suspended a prison meat supplier after it was discovered that Halal pies and pasties may have contained traces of pork DNA.

Aldi has withdrawn its Oakhurst Frozen Meatloaf after it was found to contain horse meat

The meat had been sourced from a properly Halal certificated caterer; however an investigation showed that the products could have contained traces of non-Halal meat, including pork.

In a separate development, supermarket chain Aldi said a random sample of its Oakhurst Frozen Meatloaf had been found to contain horse meat.

An Aldi spokesman said: 'Aldi has been contacted by the FSA to alert us that a random sample of our Oakhurst Frozen Meatloaf tested by a local authority has been found to contain horse meat.'

'We are surprised and deeply disappointed at this news. Our DNA testing, carried out last month in accordance with FSA guidance, also tested samples of this product and found it to be clear of horse meat. 'The product is not part of our main range of everyday products and was stocked on a limited availability basis. However, we have immediately withdrawn any of the remaining stock from our stores. 'We will continue to test products and if we have any reason to believe the meat content is not correct, we will continue to act immediately in the interests of our customers.'

'Customers can return the frozen meatloaf to their nearest Aldi for a full refund.'

A number of revelations about contaminated meat products has emerged since the recent scandal over horsemeat contamination.

Tesco was forced to issue a public apology earlier in January after tests in Ireland discovered traces of horse meat in three frozen beef burger lines.

Scandal: A UK lab testing beef products says that nine out of 15 samples in one batch contained horse, as well as lamb, chicken and pork in a scandal linked to abattoirs like this one in Romania

The findings sparked a national outcry and 10 million burgers were pulled from shelves as a result of the scandal. Other supermarkets and major brands were also discovered to have horse DNA in their products and it soon emerged that horsemeat had been served to children in school meal cottage pies. It was also revealed that some hospitals have been serving patients burgers which contain horse passed off as beef.

And the Whitbread chain announced that burgers and lasagne served at its Beefeater, Brewers Fayre, Table, Taybarns and Premier Inn hotels were contaminated.

Abattoirs in Romania were found to be one of the main sources of the horse meat in supermarkets.