



Canadian Food  
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'inspection des aliments



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## Questions and Answers Recall of Specific Products from XL Foods Inc. - Establishment 38, Brooks, Alberta

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### Information about the recall

#### What prompted this voluntary recall by XL Foods Inc.? How did the recall happen?

For more information, view the [Timeline of Events](#).

#### Where were the recalled products distributed?

The recalled products were distributed to grocery stores, hotels, restaurants and institutions within certain provinces and in some cases nationally. For a [list of products and their distribution](#). Please refer to the recall notice on the CFIA website at [inspection.gc.ca/recalls\\_XL Foods](http://inspection.gc.ca/recalls_XL Foods).

If consumers are unsure if they have affected products they should check with the store where they were purchased their meat.

#### Why does the CFIA continue to issue expanded alerts?

Recall investigations are driven by three considerations: accuracy, thoroughness and expediency.

When dealing with potentially unsafe food, the CFIA needs to be sure that it has the right products identified and all products identified. This can be a time consuming process. It involves securing and analyzing production and distribution records, which are often extensive and contained in various sources. It can also entail locating appropriate food samples and conducting tests. At the retail level, it can entail reviewing labels, distribution information and identification codes so that consumer can be properly informed of products at risk. Balancing the need to have reliable information with the need to inform the public as soon as possible means that the CFIA regularly alerts consumers of recalled product while investigations are still ongoing. With this approach, several public alerts may be issued for the same recall.

These recall expansions are common because today's food suppliers have developed intricate webs of distribution.

With this recall, some of the affected products were sent to other distributors before going to retailers meaning affected products could be processed further to make other meat products such as patties or sausages. Also, some of the affected ground beef products that were shipped to small retailers and local meat markets were re-packaged leaving them unlabelled and/or unbranded.

The CFIA continues to work with XL Foods Inc. to collect information from suppliers, distributors and retailers to identify where affected product has been distributed.

### **How much product has been recalled?**

For specific information on the volume of the meat that has been recalled, contact XL Food Inc. by phone at 403-501-2596 or by email at [mediainformation@xlfoods.com](mailto:mediainformation@xlfoods.com).

### **Are there any illnesses related to this recall?**

Yes, public health authorities have confirmed four *E. coli* O157:H7 illnesses in Alberta associated with the consumption of beef products originating from XL Foods Inc. (Establishment 38) on the identified production dates. The [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#) investigation is ongoing with the CFIA, Health Canada, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health.

For more information, visit the [PHAC](#) website.

## **Information about Establishment 38 – XL Foods**

### **If there are controls in place at this plant, how did this happen?**

The CFIA's in-depth review of the plant determined that there was no single factor that would lead to *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination of product leaving the plant. The combination of several deficiencies probably played a role. By themselves, each of these findings would not typically signal an immediate concern during the course of normal inspection activities.

Deficiencies were identified by the CFIA in the areas of *E. coli* O157:H7 control measures and sampling and testing procedures.

The detection of *E. coli* in slaughter facilities is not uncommon, and plants need to have adequate measures in place to monitor higher than normal detection rates and modify control measures accordingly.

Establishment 38 had monitoring measures in place but was not properly conducting trend analysis of the data it collected. The CFIA review found that the plant needs to improve its trend analysis and also strengthen its response measures when a higher than normal number of detections are made.

In addition, the company's control measures for meat that tested positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 were not always being followed correctly. While containers of meat testing positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 were properly handled, a small number of containers produced immediately before and after the contaminated product were not always diverted from the fresh meat line. This process, known as bracketing, is an established food safety control.

The company's maintenance plan required updating in order to address minor sanitary issues, mostly related to the older age of the building. The CFIA detected issues related to adequate control of condensation and ventilation issues. These specific deficiencies are not likely related to the *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination.

### **How many inspectors does the CFIA have at XL Foods, Inc. and how many inspectors does the CFIA have overall?**

The CFIA currently has 40 inspectors and 6 veterinarians assigned full-time to the XL Foods, Inc. plant in Brooks, Alberta providing systematic inspection and oversight. They work in two shifts to ensure full coverage whenever the plant is operating. There have been no changes to the existing staffing levels at XL Beef in the last 12 months. In fact, since 2006 we have added 2 veterinarians and six inspectors to the plant complement.

Since March 2006, field inspection staff increased by 711 from 2,823 to 3,534 in March 2012, approximately 25 per cent.

The term "field inspection staff" covers front-line inspectors and inspection managers who work in food processing plants, import service centres and field offices across the country. This

includes food inspectors for meat as well as inspectors who specialize in food safety investigations.

### **What are the CFIA's next steps at Establishment 38 – XL Foods Inc.?**

The CFIA has temporarily suspended the licence to operate Establishment 38 - XL Foods Inc., in Brooks, Alberta. The CFIA determined that adequate controls for food safety were not fully implemented in the facility. The CFIA identified a number of deficiencies during an in-depth review of the facility. To date, the company had not adequately implemented the agreed-upon corrective actions and did not present acceptable plans to address longer-term issues.

All products currently at this plant are under CFIA detention and control. These products will only be released after being tested for *E. coli* O157:H7. The company has also expanded its voluntary recall of raw meat produced on August 24, 27, 28, 29 and September 5.

The CFIA will continue to immediately alert consumers as these additional products are identified. This will lead to a series of public alerts over the next few days as implicated products and processed products that contain them are identified and traced.

XL Foods Inc. will not resume operations until the CFIA is fully confident in the plant's capacity to effectively manage food safety risks.

## **Information for consumers**

### **What is *E. coli* O157:H7?**

*E. coli* O157:H7 is a bacteria that when consumed, may cause serious and potentially life-threatening illness. Food contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7 may not look or smell spoiled.

### **What should consumers do about this recall?**

Consumers are encouraged to check their fridge and/or freezer to see if they have the product in their home. To find out what products have been recalled, consumers should refer to the [recalled products chart](#) on the CFIA website.

### **I cooked ground beef that is part of this recall, is it safe to eat?**

If you have already prepared and stored this meat (for example made chilli or spaghetti sauce), do not consume it. If you are unsure whether a product is part of the recall, the safest course of action is to throw it away: When in doubt, throw it out!

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