

Live bivalve molluscs traceability and investigation

Regulation EC 853/2004 requires that each package of live bivalve molluscs from a dispatch centre be accompanied by a waterproof label bearing the establishment number and the date of packing. These labels may also carry a batch number. Regulation EC 853/2004 also requires that the retailer keep this label for at least 60 days after opening the package.

In the event of an outbreak of Norovirus from the consumption of live bivalve molluscs (LBM) i.e. oysters, it is essential to be able to trace them back to the original laying. This can only be done with the aid of the information on the label. Unfortunately many retailers are unaware of this requirement and discard the label at the time of opening.

Food Safety officers investigating a potential incident / outbreak involving LBM will need to collect all of the information on the label and relay this as soon as possible to the Environmental Health Department (EHD) responsible for the dispatch centre, together with as much information as they can gather about the number of people ill and whether or not Norovirus infection has been confirmed by testing of faecal samples.

Anyone associated with a potential incident/outbreak suffering food poisoning symptoms will be advised to visit their GP and get a specimen tested for Norovirus.

Relevant extract of legislation

Web link: [http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Reg853_2004\(1\).pdf](http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Reg853_2004(1).pdf)
[EC 853 Annex III Section VIII (live bivalve molluscs)]

CHAPTER VII: IDENTIFICATION MARKING AND LABELLING

1. The label, including the identification mark, must be waterproof.
2. In addition to the general requirements for identification marks contained in Annex II, Section I, the following information must be present on the label:
 - (a) the species of bivalve mollusc (common name and scientific name); and
 - (b) the date of packaging, comprising at least the day and the month. By way of derogation from Directive 2000/13/EC, the date of minimum durability may be replaced by the entry 'these animals must be alive when sold'.
3. The retailer must keep the label attached to the packaging of live bivalve molluscs that are not in individual consumer size packages for at least 60 days after splitting up the contents.