

Clenbuterol in Pork and Pig Offal

There have been local food poisoning outbreaks due to the consumption of clenbuterol tainted pig offal. Clenbuterol is a pharmaceutical product that has been used in overseas countries for the treatment of respiratory disease in certain animal species. This pharmaceutical product is not registered in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The drug clenbuterol is not used in the treatment of pigs. However, it has the side effect of increasing lean meat production, which has led to its illicit use in pig farming. Clenbuterol accumulates in body of pigs especially internal organs such as lungs, livers and kidneys. Consumption of clenbuterol tainted offal and meat may cause symptoms like dizziness, headache, hand tremor, palpitation and agitation. People with heart diseases are prone to more severe effects.



In Hong Kong, there is an established system for screening of clenbuterol use in pigs and source tracing of problematic ones. Sale of clenbuterol tainted meat or offal is in breach of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, Cap.132. The maximum penalty is \$50,000 and imprisonment for 6 months. . We have also in place a comprehensive food surveillance programme for clenbuterol in pork and pig offal. Samples of pork and pig offal are taken regularly from fresh provision shops and market stalls for testing of clenbuterol residue. Between 1.1.1999 and 30.6.2000, 5547 such samples were tested and 22 prosecutions were taken.

The public should patronize licensed and reputable meat shops for purchasing of pork or pig offal. There is no cause for undue alarm in the consumption of pork and pig offal. However, a balanced diet is always important. The trade should obtain the supply of pigs, pork and pig offal from approved and reliable sources and should not use clenbuterol in animal feed.