

HOLD YOUR HORSES

If South Africans wanted a wakeup call on the status of the foods we consume whilst oblivious to the ingredients contained therein, the latest news from Europe and South Africa was more than they bargained for. They got a bucketful of cold reality tossed into their faces instead.

Hot on the hooves of the shocking disclosure of horse meat discovered in branded products such as Findus, imported by supermarkets here and on the shelves of supermarkets of the likes of Tesco in the UK, and meals in schools in Europe, came the South African study by Professor Louw Hoffman and Dr Donna Cawthorn of Stellenbosch University. Their damning study found that anything from soya, donkey, goat and water buffalo in up to 68% of the 139 minced meats, burger patties, deli meats, sausages and dried meats that were tested from retail outlets and butcheries in four provinces. They also found undeclared pork, chicken, soya and gluten substitution without any declaration on the labels.

Whereas Professor Hoffman's report did not name the outlets, South Africa's leading consumer journalist, the Independent Newspaper's and East Coast Radio's Wendy Knowler pulled no punches and conducted tests in ten outlets and published the findings in major newspapers. Only one item was above reproach. Her findings revealed undeclared items in the products some of which she subsequently established was due to in store contamination.

Understandably, these revelations have created consternation in the broader community who were appalled and filled with revulsion at the thought of possibly having consumed the offensive products. This has resulted in many queries to our offices from the public and the media.

At SANHA we can categorically assure our subscribers that meat products certified by us are most definitely Halaal on the basis of having met all aspects of our criteria and do not contain any of the Haraam (unlawful) ingredients mentioned in the reports.

Our assurances are based on the following;

Imported meats are not unconditionally accepted by SANHA.

Whilst many of the questionable products are imported products at supermarket level, there is also the use of mechanically deboned meat commonly known as MDM by food processors. Click here to see our cautionary on this subject <http://www.sanha.org.za/flashnews/flashn50.htm>

With SANHA's experience gleaned from many site visits abroad over the years it has serious misgivings and reservations on the standards employed at many of these plants. Without the requisite monitoring and supervision standards in place we have steadfastly refused unconditional certification or endorsement.

The saga of the Orion Cold Storage Company of Cape Town who over a year ago were involved in fraudulently labeling Irish and Belgian pork and re-labeling them as Halaal sheep/veal products, Australian Kangaroo meat as Halaal beef trimmings, Canadian dairy powder for animal feed as Halaal skim milk powder and non Halaal Spanish poultry products as Halaal was as a result of them exploiting the local Cape certifier's certification.

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We urge consumers to be wary of purchasing imported meats irrespective of whether they carry a Halaal label or not.

Local meat supplies

SANHA certifies 34 meat and poultry abattoirs where SANHA employs full time supervisors. It has further approved another 23 abattoirs which have entered into agreements giving SANHA access and inspection rights. These are dedicated Halaal plants where all products processed are Halaal and therefore there is no chance of contamination with any non-Halaal.

To maintain the integrity of the Halaal chain, another safeguard is that we have certified 41 butcheries who uphold the Halaal standards. [Click here for our list of certified/ approved abattoirs and butchers.](#)

Label declaration

The Noble Quran exhorts Muslims to be conscious of Almighty and to be amongst the truthful for the Messenger (peace be upon him) stated, **"One who deceives is not of us."** Accordingly, we view any acts of non disclosure or falsifying of information that mislead as a grave sin, contravention of the law and a crime against the people. Sufficient evidence exists to show that whilst these outlets do not run the risk of contamination with non halaal products, most definitely labeling laws are being transgressed, with particular reference to bulking agents such as soya and wheat gluten are utilised. Plans are afoot to meet with our certified butcheries to address and advise in the resolution of this issue with guidance from the appropriate authorities.

In this respect SANHA welcomes the Minister's announcement in Parliament on the 28th February 2013 of the appointment of

a probe by the National Consumer Commission (NCC) which could include pulling meat off shop shelves for random testing and sanctions against the transgressors who fail to comply. SANHA also believes that that this action must also be accompanied by an educational programme to assist establishments particularly small businesses to comply with all aspects of the labeling laws. SANHA is willing to participate in assisting and facilitating initiatives in disseminating information to its abattoirs, sources of supply and interested stakeholders.

We urge the public to take charge by demanding that service providers comply with the law and do not infringe their rights through dishonesty and mislabeling of products.

Get off the high horse of apathy before it ends up on your plate.