



9 July 2026

## **NVWA: Risk Assessment and Measures**

The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) asked its Office for Risk Assessment & Research (BuRO) to assess the food safety risks that may have resulted from the activities of a meat processor suspected of large-scale fraud. BuRO subsequently carried out two risk assessments: one on the risk posed by prions (BSE) and one on other microbiological food safety hazards.

The assessments were prompted by findings from the NVWA's Intelligence and Investigation Service (IOD). On 16 April, the IOD carried out an inspection at a meat processing company that processes, among other things, cattle heads and slaughter by-products. The company supplies this (minced) meat as a raw material to other businesses producing food and raw pet food. The company is suspected of placing unsafe meat on the market and falsifying documentation. As a result, products contaminated with pathogenic bacteria may have entered the food and feed chain, posing a potential risk to the health of consumers and companion animals. A criminal investigation has been launched under the direction of the Functional Public Prosecution Service of the Dutch Public Prosecution Service.

### **Conclusion of BuRO's Risk Assessment**

BuRO concludes that the risk posed by prions, which can cause bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is negligible for consumers through food and for companion animals through pet food. The risk posed by other microbiological food safety hazards is likewise considered negligible. This conclusion is based on the assumption that the fresh meat and minced meat supplied by the processor are further processed into heat-treated meat products by approved food business operators. BuRO notes that boundary conditions for these conclusions are, that the control measures applied throughout the production chain, up to and including the slaughterhouse, must comply with the applicable legal requirements.

### **Measures**

Since the IOD inspection on 16 April, the NVWA has taken the necessary measures based on the information available at each stage of the investigation. Immediately after the inspection, the company's approval was withdrawn, meaning that from that date onwards it was no longer permitted to process or market meat intended for human consumption. The NVWA also ordered the withdrawal of unsafe food products from the market on several occasions. Under Article 14 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, food is considered unsafe if it is either injurious to health or unfit for human consumption. Food business operators are therefore required to withdraw unsafe food from the market.

As the criminal investigation progresses, the IOD continues to provide new information. Although the full nature and scale of the fraudulent practices have not yet been established, the NVWA continuously assesses the available evidence to determine what measures are needed to protect food safety.

### **Response to the Risk Assessment**

Following the initial assessment of the food safety risks, the NVWA launched a withdrawal of potentially unsafe food and animal feed on 24 April. All unheated meat products were withdrawn from the market, including products at retail level, because of the potential risk they posed to human and animal health. BuRO's risk assessment confirms that this measure was necessary. Products that had already undergone heat treatment, or that were still due to be heat-treated by an approved establishment, were allowed to remain on the market at that stage because industrial heat treatment eliminates pathogenic bacteria. As a result of the withdrawal, no unheated products from the company remained on the market. The NVWA monitored compliance with these measures.

The criminal investigation also showed that the company had produced raw materials that had come into contact with brain tissue. Raw materials contaminated with brain tissue may not be used in the production of food or animal feed because of the possible presence of prions that can cause BSE. The initial risk assessment concluded that this risk was negligible, and BuRO's assessment confirms that conclusion.

New information obtained during the criminal investigation later revealed that the company had breached food safety requirements on a much larger scale than previously known. For example, spoiled meat had been placed on the market, unfavourable laboratory results had been altered, and raw materials had been supplied to companies that did not hold the required approval to manufacture meat products. In addition, slaughter by-products, including slaughter waste and meat trimmings, had been used in the production of minced meat. As a result, contaminated, spoiled or otherwise unsuitable materials were incorporated into minced meat products on a large scale.

Because the company was unable to demonstrate which products contained the unsafe raw materials, the NVWA decided in early June to extend the withdrawal to all minced meat products that could potentially contain these materials, including products that had already been heat-treated.

The withdrawal is limited to minced meat products. Other products, such as beef cheeks, remain on the market because they are not considered unsafe.

### **Follow-up**

The IOD's criminal investigation is expected to continue until the end of the year. New information may emerge during that time. If it does, the NVWA will assess the information to determine whether any additional measures are required.