



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 14, 2018

PH18-012

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Consumers Warned about Certain Cactus Imported from Mexico due to Health Risk

SACRAMENTO – The [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) and the [California Department of Pesticide Regulation \(DPR\)](#) today warned people not to eat cactus pads, or nopales, imported from Mexico sold at specific retail and wholesale locations around the state due to the presence of unapproved pesticides.

Routine surveillance samples collected by DPR inspectors found various pesticides, including dimethoate, omethoate, monocrotophos and methidathion, at levels that pose a health risk to humans. Both monocrotophos and methidathion have been banned for food use in the United States for several years.



“Anyone feeling ill after consuming cactus products should consult their health care provider,” said CDPH Director and State Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith. “The symptoms of acute poisoning may include sweating, headache, weakness, nausea, vomiting, hypersalivation, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea. Consumption of monocrotophos can lead to neurotoxicity and permanent nerve damage.”

DPR sampled contaminated cactus pads that were offered for sale to consumers and wholesale customers between January 23-29 at the following locations:

- Rancho San Miguel Markets, Madera
- La Monarca Market, Lower Lake
- FreshPoint Central California, Turlock
- Arteaga’s Food Center, Sacramento
- Stater Bros. Distribution Center, San Bernardino
- S&L Wholesale Produce, San Francisco

DPR immediately removed the cactus pads it could locate from store shelves and distribution centers. The items were quarantined or destroyed so that they do not pose a threat to consumers. However, DPR believes it is possible that some of the cactus pads may have been sold to other stores in California, Nevada and Oregon. The tainted

produce was packaged with the brand names “Mexpogroup Fresh Produce,” “Aramburo,” or “Los Tres Huastecos”.

“Many Californians eat cactus as part of their diet, but the pesticide levels we have found at some specific locations are concerning,” said Brian Leahy, DPR director. “We are not aware of any illnesses that have been reported to date, but we suggest that anyone who bought this product from these locations recently, return it to the place of purchase or dispose of it in the garbage.”

Washing or peeling the cactus is not effective and people should not try to salvage any of this contaminated produce.

CDPH and CDPR have alerted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration about the issue. Consumers that observe the product being offered for sale are encouraged to report the activity to the CDPH toll free complaint line at (800) 495-3232.

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