# 《长沙286人食物中毒 疑似瘦肉精致病》

Nearly 300 people fell ill in central China after eating meat suspected of containing illegal additives, the latest in a spate of contamination problems to emerge even as the government vows to crack down on food-safety violators.

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Officials in Changsha, the capital of central Hunan province, confirmed on Monday that 286 people had sought medical help over the weekend after eating in Wu Feng, a village 25 miles southwest of Changsha. Eight people are still in hospital.

Wu Hong/European Pressphoto Agency???????????????????????????????????????????????????????????????????
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The state-run China Daily newspaper blamed clenbuterol, a substance that speeds muscle growth in pigs but can cause headache, nausea and an irregular heartbeat when consumed by humans. Changsha authorities could not confirm the report, saying that they were opening an investigation.

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China has been hit by a wave of food-additive scares recently. Health officials over the weekend ordered 17 noodle makers in Dongguan, a city in southern Guangdong province, to stop production after discovering their products contained non-edible additives such as ink, industrial dye and paraffin wax, according to the China Daily.

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In Guangdong, authorities last week seized 16 tons of pork contaminated with sodium borate, which changes the color of the meat to make it look more like higher-priced beef, according to the People's Procuratorate of Guangdong Province, a government body in charge of prosecutions.

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Also last week, police arrested 12 people in the northeast China city of Shenyang after finding sodium nitrite, a toxic chemical that makes vegetables grow faster, in bean sprouts, according to the Shenyang Municipal Public Security Bureau.

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Last month health inspectors discovered clenbuterol in pork products from a subsidiary of China's largest meat-processing company, Shuanghui Group. The company apologized on its website and said it discontinued partnerships with producers using the contaminant.

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More than two years have passed since China's government, responding to a scandal in which milk contaminated with the industrial chemical melamine killed at least six children and caused illnesses in nearly 300,000 others, vowed to enforce stricter food-safety regulations.

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Though the government executed two men involved in the production and sale of the contaminated milk and threatened other violators with the death penalty, many believe it has fallen short of its promise to improve food standards.

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Enforcement hasn't been strict enough, said Wu Ming, a professor of public health at Beijing University. "We've enacted so many policies, but haven't been able to fully implement them," said Ms. Ming, adding that many people have evaded laws or used personal relationships to avoid punishment for breaking them.

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Lower-level municipal authorities also often fail to report violations, said Lester Ross, a Beijing-based attorney with U.S. law firm WilmerHale. These companies are all taxpayers, he explained, and seizing their operations would typically result in loss of local tax revenue.

PHEI CHIN/European Pressphoto Agency????????????????????????????????????????????????(WilmerHale)???????(Lester Ross)???????????????????????????????????????????????????

Mr. Ross said that many companies see additives as a way to shave costs or increase income. "In many instances, the people doing this have no idea that they could be putting people's lives at risk," he said said. "The government, including the Ministry of Health, needs to step in and educate people at all levels of the dangers involved in using chemicals in food."

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China's Ministry of Health did not immediately reply to requests for comment. At a national conference on food safety in February, Health Minister Chen Zhu announced plans to decrease food contamination and hazards this year.

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"Reducing and eliminating food-safety problems and related crimes is a long arduous and complicated process" he was quoted in the China Daily as saying.

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