

To: Heads of Environmental Health Services (England)
Directors of Trading Standards (England)

cc: APHA
CIEH
LACORS
APA
TSI

29 July 2010

Reference: ENF/E/10/029

Dear Colleagues,

SALES OF WATER LABELLED AS “ZAM ZAM” WATER

For information

We are aware that water labelled as “Zam Zam” water continues to be found on the UK market for sale to Muslims. Analysis of samples of this water on sale in the UK in previous years has identified elevated levels of arsenic and nitrate, which are a potential risk to health. In addition water brought back as personal imports by pilgrims have been tested by Local Authorities and shown to have similar levels of arsenic and nitrate. In the absence of authoritative data on the composition of genuine Zam Zam water it is not possible to confirm or deny that water which is presented as Zam zam water is genuine or not. Personal imports are not, however, covered by legal limits set out in the legislation cited below.

This is a reminder that Ramadan will begin in early August and consumption of Zam Zam water by the Muslim community will be at its highest. This water, which is sacred to Muslims, comes from a specific source in Saudi Arabia and cannot legally be exported from that country for commercial sale. Therefore any product found in the UK would have an uncertain origin and could pose a safety risk. You may find the following advice on dealing any water found on sale labelled as “Zam Zam” helpful:

- *Water labelled as “Zam Zam” found on sale* - you may wish to have regard to Section 3 of the Food Safety Act 1990 on the presumption that food is intended for human consumption. If water is or is presumed to be for food use, then it may be sampled and analysed. Particular concerns with this water are arsenic and nitrate. If you have suspicion of non-compliance with the relevant food safety requirements under the Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water (England) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/2785), then the water should be

detained. If water is found not to comply with the relevant food safety requirements for bottled water, then appropriate enforcement action should be taken.

- *Water labelled as “Zam Zam” found on sale but is claimed not to be for human consumption or is labelled ‘for external use only’* – the UK Islamic Shari’a Council has advised that Zam Zam water is **always** intended for human consumption. Follow the guidance given in the bullet point above.

We have also written to port health authorities advising them to take appropriate measures on consignments labelled as “Zam Zam” water received at ports.

If you need further information on this issue, then please contact on 020 7276 8448 or by email at incidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk. If a consumer raises any health concerns, then please refer them to the attached Agency advice.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Appleby', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Appleby
Enforcement and Local Authority Delivery Division
Food Standards Agency