



Lead found in Asian Candies

PRODUCTS OF INTEREST

By WENDY CRITTENDEN, August 14, 2012

A new study has found popular plum and ginger candies exported from Asia and sold in the Bay Area could contain dangerously high amounts of toxic chemicals. Lead exceeding amounts permitted by California law was found in 14 plum and ginger candies on the shelves of a selected number of East Bay retailers, the **Center for Environmental Health¹⁾** (CEH), an Oakland watchdog group, said last week.

All 19 sweets tested by the center were made in Hong Kong, China and Taiwan and distributed by Asian or U.S. suppliers for sale at Lucky, 99 Ranch Market, Lion Supermarket, Marina Foods and San Pablo Supermarket. CEH selected stores in the East Bay for its study, but the candies, most of which appear under brand names written in Chinese characters, are also sold elsewhere.

Under California's consumer law Proposition 65, which voters passed in 1986, California limits the amount of lead in candy to one-tenth parts per million. But the treats contained anywhere from four to 39 times that amount. One package of plum candy from 99 Ranch Market had 96 times the amount of lead allowed by law, the group said.

Scientists are increasingly concerned that there is no safe level of lead exposure, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead poisoning in adults is associated with infertility, mood disorders, memory loss and high blood pressure. In children, lead exposure can cause learning difficulties, behavioral problems, seizures, coma and even death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lead has been listed under CA's Prop. 65 as a developmental toxicant since 1987 and as a carcinogen since 1992.

CEH tested candies purchased in February and June. In July, the agency warned people not to eat a certain kind of plum candy from Taiwan after it was found to have toxic levels of lead. The study's scope was small, but the high concentrations of the chemical indicate a widespread problem, said Christine Cordero, program director for the **Center for Environmental Health²⁾**. She recommended that parents have their children tested for lead in their blood, and avoid buying the sweets.

In 2006, CEH reached legal settlements with more than 30 candy makers, including leading sellers of spicy candies from Mexico, after discovering high amounts of lead in their products [see **Candy Deal Sweetened By Nearly \$1 Million In Penalties, Fees³⁾**, July 8, 2006]. Most recently, the organization announced finding the chemical in designer purses and jewelry sold in California [see **Progress Made, But Some Handbags Still Pose Lead Threats⁴⁾**, June 27, 2012].

The **Center for Environmental Health⁵⁾** said plum and ginger candy with dangerous levels of lead

were found in these stores:

- Lucky (El Cerrito)
- 99 Ranch Market (Richmond)
- Lion Supermarket (Milpitas)
- Marina Foods (Fremont)
- San Pablo Supermarket (San Pablo)

These suppliers distributed candy with lead problems:

- JFC International Inc.
- Kam Lee Yuen Trading Co. Inc.
- Queensway Foods Co. Inc.
- Continental Trading Co. (Hong Kong)
- Dayou Trading Co. (Taiwan)
- Sanh Yuan Enterprise Co. Ltd. (Taiwan)

U.S. distributors for 99 Ranch would not comment. CEH has told the five stores and three U.S. distributors it intends to sue.[Source: **SF Gate**⁶⁾]

Resources for this article

1. Center for Environmental Health

<http://www.keh.org/>

2. Candy Deal Sweetened By Nearly \$1 Million In Penalties, Fees

<https://www.prop65clearinghouse.com/documents/2414>

3. Progress Made, But Some Handbags Still Pose Lead Threats

<https://www.prop65clearinghouse.com/articles/2283>

4. SF Gate

<http://www.sfgate.com>