

QC URGES VOLUNTARY REPORTING OF ASF-TAINTED MEAT

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Friday signed an executive order that will encourage voluntary reporting of meat possibly tainted with African swine fever (ASF) among local retailers, particularly supermarkets, independent meat shops and groceries. As confirmed by tests conducted by the Bureau of Animal Industry, the ASF virus can survive even in frozen meat, which were found in meat stocked in some Quezon City supermarkets earlier this month.

In her executive order, Belmonte said the city aimed to promote “self-regulation by the retailers, voluntary cooperation and good faith compliance” to combat the spread of the virus. Retailers will be required to craft an in-store quality control action plan to detect and dispose of any infected or unsafe meat and to sanitize the concerned area.

Action plans will then be subject to the approval of the City Veterinary Department, which will also supervise the disposal and sanitation of Asf-infected meat. Staff involved in processing meat, including supervisors, meat handlers, custodians, butchers, meat sellers, supply officers and quality inspectors shall undergo training on sanitary and quality control practices.

They shall be taught how to recognize possible signs that the meat is “diseased, infected, putrefied, contaminated, or is otherwise unsafe, whether due to ASF or other reasons.” Retailers are also instructed to accept pork only from suppliers or producers with official certifications from the National Meat Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture or from the Food and Drugs Administration.

For its part, the City Veterinary Department will review and approve the retailers’ action plans, supervise the disposal and sanitation of Asf-infected meat and conduct regular voluntary inspections of retailers’ pork inventory.

The executive order ensures that the inspection results will be held in strict confidence, “unless the mayor reasonably determines that the protection of public safety requires otherwise.”