

# Birmingham meat plant fined over £250,000 for removal of detained meat

On Monday 11 March 2019 at Birmingham Magistrates Court, a meat processing plant based in Birmingham, plead guilty to illegally accessing meat detained by The Food Standards Agency.

The business, Asia Poultry & Meat Ltd, received a fine and costs totalling more than a quarter of a million pounds.

The court ordered that they pay a fine of £240,000 with costs of £12,824.05 and a surcharge of £170.

Asia Poultry and Meat Ltd had been due to stand trial for breaching a detention notice which prohibited access to food chillers without the FSA present before they plead guilty.

The incident took place after the FSA found evidence of rodent activity during an unannounced inspection in October 2017.

Inspectors took immediate action to stop the site operations and temporarily detained unwrapped products to assess if they were suitable for human consumption.

When the FSA inspectors returned the next day, they found evidence that the seals used to detain the product had been tampered with and that items had been moved or were missing.

Asia Poultry and Meat Ltd were warned about the consequences of breaching the detention notice before FSA staff returned to find more meat had been moved following the first breach.

At sentencing, District Judge Jan Jellema said:

"I consider the matter to be a very serious offence.

"It is entirely clear those in control sought to evade the intended effect of the notice repeatedly, breaking the seals to chillers.

"The inevitable conclusion and inference is that stock was removed and sold to try and mitigate the losses of the seizure and destruction... It is clear and obvious the motivation was financial.

"It is the clear responsibility of those in charge and nobody else would've had any motivation. The attempted deception was even maintained in interview.... I bear in mind the fine must be sufficiently substantial to bring home the need to comply..."

Dr Colin Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer at the FSA said:

"The food business ignored a formal detention notice put in place to protect consumers.

"Because of its reckless actions, which could have put consumers at risk, they have now been brought to justice.

“We will continue to investigate and prosecute any food business who fails to uphold acceptable food hygiene standards on behalf of the consumer.”