



# CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

新加坡消费者协会

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MEDIA RELEASE

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## **CASE WARNS CONSUMERS ON RETAILERS SELLING THAWED MEAT AS CHILLED MEAT**

This year, 31 pork retailers were fined \$300 each for trying to pass off thawed frozen pork as chilled pork by the National Environment Agency (NEA). CASE takes a serious view of this and would like to warn consumers of such retailers with unfair practices. Penalties for selling thawed frozen meat as chilled meat could be a fine of up to \$2,000, and in the case of continued offence, a further fine not exceeding \$100 for each day the offence continues.

Meat, either chilled or frozen, is flown from the abattoir to retailers to ensure that consumers in Singapore get to enjoy fresh produce.

Consumers normally opt for chilled fresh meat over thawed frozen meat, as the former is said to taste better, since freezing process can alter somewhat the physical structure of the meat (muscle fibres). However, chilled fresh meat will cost more than its frozen equivalent, on account of transport costs, handling charges, and shorter shelf life. For example, chilled fresh pork typically commands up to 50% premium over thawed frozen pork.

Given the significant price difference between two types of meat, some traders are tempted to pass off thawed frozen meat as chilled fresh meat. This is compounded by the ignorance of consumers to judge visually whether the slab of meat is chilled or formerly frozen.

To help consumers make the right choice, meat retailers must physically segregate chilled meat from thawed frozen meat and clearly label them as "Chilled Meat" and "Thawed Frozen Meat", respectively, if they are displayed for sale in the same chiller.

In addition, for thawed frozen meat, a label reading "Thawed Frozen Meat; Do not refreeze; To be consumed within 3 days" should be displayed conspicuously in the chiller.

In view of the difficulties in telling the two different types of meat apart, CASE advises consumers to observe the following precautions before making their purchase:

1. Patronise meat retail shops/stalls with clear labels (as described above).
2. Ask the butcher/ retailer whether the pork is chilled or frozen if it is not clearly labeled. Consumers can call NEA's 24-hour hotline at 1-800 2255 632 (1 800 CALL NEA) if they suspect any retailer of trying to pass off thawed frozen meat as chilled meat.

To protect consumer interests and safety, CASE would look into conducting random surveys on different kinds of meat sold on the market. NEA would also continue enforcement checks on meat retailers to put a stop to such errant practices.