

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reported that 16 people have now been sickened from a hepatitis A outbreak linked to blackberries.

The FDA and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are investigating illnesses in Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.

It says these are potentially linked to fresh conventional blackberries from the grocery store, Fresh Thyme Farmers Market.

The company says that there is no evidence any of the product was contaminated via handling in its stores.

Of the 16 people who have fallen ill, nine have been hospitalized. The most recent illness onset date on Nov. 15, 2019.

The FDA said that although the ill patients reported consuming fresh conventional blackberries in six states, traceback information to date shows that these berries came from a distribution center that ships fresh berries to Fresh Thyme Farmers Market stores in 11 states.

These are Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

"As this investigation continues, the FDA will work with our federal and state partners to obtain additional information during the traceback investigation and will update this advisory as more information becomes available," the FDA said.

The FDA is urging consumers to not eat any fresh conventional blackberries if purchased between Sept. 9- 30 from Fresh Thyme Farmers Market stores in the 11 states mentioned above.

People who purchased the fresh blackberries and then froze those berries for later consumption should not eat these berries.

### **Statement from Fresh Thyme Farmers Market**

In a statement on Tuesday, Fresh Thyme Farmers Market said it is fully cooperating with the relevant agencies on the investigation and awaiting the next steps.

"At this time, there is no reason to believe that any of the product was contaminated via

handling in our stores," it said.

"In addition, the agencies are ONLY concerned with product purchased between September 9 and September 30; product purchased or consumed outside of these dates are NOT subject to the investigation. We are working with these agencies to identify our suppliers and isolate the source of this contamination.

"Fresh Thyme takes the health and safety of our customers and our team members very seriously. Fresh Thyme Farmers Market has a stringent process for ensuring compliance to all local, state and federal health and hygiene regulations."

It added that if any of its customers have any of the fresh conventional blackberries purchased between Sept 9 - 30, remaining in their refrigerators or freezers, they should discard them immediately or return them to Fresh Thyme for a refund.

"Again, Fresh Thyme is committed to the health and safety of our customers, and we will continue to work closely with these agencies to determine the source of the contamination," it said.

## **Nebraska woman sues**

Meanwhile, a Nebraska woman who contracted hepatitis A after eating blackberries she bought at a Fresh Thyme grocery store has sued the company, [KETV](#) reports.

The woman who filed the lawsuit on Nov. 27 , Kerrie Tabaka, says she was hospitalized for a week for treatment and continues to experience fatigue and other symptoms.