

Sausage additive linked to cancer

An additive used in some sausages and burgers could cause cancer, food safety experts have warned.

The European Food Safety Authority has expressed concern about the use of the colouring E128, also known as Red 2G.

Its expert panel on food additives has recommended that the dye should no longer be considered safe for human consumption.

The Food Standards Agency is currently investigating whether products containing E128 are on sale in the UK.

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European Food Safety Authority

A spokeswoman for the Food and Drink Federation, which represents UK manufacturers, said the use of Red 2G here was "likely to be minimal".

Under current EU food laws, limited amounts of Red 2G are permitted for use in sausages with a minimum cereal content of 6% and in burger meat with a minimum vegetable and/or cereal content of 4%.

Cancer in mice

However, Red 2G is converted in the body into an oily substance called aniline, which has now been shown in tests on rats and mice to have the potential to trigger cancer.

Animals injected with aniline developed cancerous tumours.

In a statement the EFSA panel said: "Given new scientific evidence, it cannot be excluded that aniline's carcinogenic potential is due to damage to the genetic material of the cells.

"It is therefore not possible to determine a level of intake for aniline which may be regarded as safe for humans.

"The Panel therefore concluded that Red 2G should be regarded as being of safety concern."

The EFSA, which is re-examining the scientific evidence on all food colourings, has passed its findings to the European Commission.

Red 2G is already banned in a number of countries, including Japan.