



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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JOINTLY ISSUED BY NEA, MOH AND AVA

### **POW SING RESTAURANT SUSPENDED FOR LINKS TO OUTBREAK OF GASTROENTERITIS**

*29 gastroenteritis cases reported; joint NEA-MOH-AVA investigations ongoing*

**Singapore, 13 July 2016** – The Ministry of Health (MOH), National Environment Agency (NEA), and Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) are investigating several cases of gastroenteritis reported between 4 and 11 July 2016, traced to the consumption of food prepared at Pow Sing Restaurant, located at 63-65 Serangoon Garden Way. As of 12 July 2016, a total of 29 cases were verified to be affected, and further investigations are ongoing.

2. MOH, NEA and AVA were first notified of the cases on 4 July 2016 and had immediately conducted joint inspections of the restaurant's premises on 5 July 2016. Several hygiene lapses, including failure to maintain temperature records and allowing an unregistered food handler to prepare food, were observed. The operator had been instructed to rectify them immediately. On receiving further notification of another 4 affected persons on 11 July 2016, there is reason to suspect that there might be a continuing source of infection in the premises.

3. To protect consumers from public health risks, NEA has suspended the licence of Pow Sing Restaurant with effect from 13 July 2016, and required it to dispose all ready-to-eat food, thawed food and perishable food items, conduct thorough cleaning and sanitising of its premises including equipment, utensils, work surfaces and toilets, and review and rectify the lapses in food preparation processes identified during the joint inspections.

4. AVA has collected food samples from Pow Sing Restaurant, as part of the investigation. Laboratory tests are ongoing.

5. MOH has collected stool samples from the affected cases and the restaurant's food handlers have been sent for stool screening. Only food handlers who are tested to be free of food poisoning pathogens, and have re-attended and passed the Basic Food Hygiene Course will be allowed to resume work. MOH and NEA will continue to monitor the situation closely.

6. Based on our joint investigation findings, NEA will take the necessary enforcement actions against the operator for the hygiene infringements found.

Licensed food operators have the responsibility to put in place systems and processes to ensure high hygiene standards are observed by their food handlers at all times. Food operators are also reminded to ensure that all food handlers are registered with the NEA and that they do not engage in any food preparation if they are sick. Food retail outlets are inspected regularly and strict enforcement action will be taken against any errant food retail outlets. Members of the public are advised to report such incidents by calling our 24-hour NEA Contact Centre at 1800-CALL-NEA (1800-2255-632).