PLATE EVIDENCE · TEACHING PACK

Food Recalled? Why the Batch Code Matters More Than the Headline

A sourced classroom pack on UK food recalls, allergy alerts and lot marks.

FREE CLASSROOM SAMPLE

This pack turns a week of official UK food alerts into a lesson on reading notices properly. Students learn the difference between a withdrawal and a recall, practise matching batch codes and dates, and see why the name on the front of the pack is not enough. Think of a recall like a theatre evac: the announcement names the show, but your ticket number (the batch code and date) decides whether your seat is affected.

Lesson at a glance

Subject fit	GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition; Design & Technology (food); health & social care; adult food-hygiene and allergen sessions
Suggested stage	Key Stage 4, post-16, and adult / health-professional CPD (adapt as needed)
Lesson length	One lesson of 50–70 minutes, or two shorter sessions
Film	Plate Evidence Film C — Food Recalled? Why the Batch Code Matters More Than the Headline (about 8 minutes)
Film link	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKkWRDYRBs
Written investigation	https://headless-krsvewplfdd-carnivoremuscle-140f.wix-site-host.com/blog.html (written investigation scheduled; use the film and this pack in the meantime)

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Pack dated 9 November 2026 (Europe/London). Sources were checked against official texts and the Plate Evidence fact-check for this film. Laws and official notices can change — always check the primary source before teaching.

1. How to use this pack

Play the short Plate Evidence film first, or after the fact sheet — either works. The film is a calm walk through three official alerts. This pack supplies the lesson structure, the sourced facts, a label-reading activity, and a quiz.

Film link (direct URL): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKkWRDYRBs. The film is scheduled to go public at 10:00 on Saturday 14 November 2026 (Europe/London). Until then it is unlisted, so the link still works if you have this URL.

- Read the caveats with the class: this is public information explained, not medical or legal advice, and not a substitute for the official notice.
- Always check food.gov.uk / alerts.food.gov.uk for the current alert. Notices can be updated.
- Do not bring recalled food into the classroom. The activity uses a fictional label based on the public notices, not real packaging.
- Students with coeliac disease, wheat allergy, sulphite sensitivity or asthma may find the cases personally relevant. Handle the discussion with care; nobody should have to disclose a diagnosis.

If this is the free sample

You may use this sample with one class or training group to evaluate the series. For a school-, trust- or service-wide licence, or for the companion packs on Red 40 and the EU meat-names rule, please enquire at https://headless-krsvewplfdd-carnivoremuscle-140f.wix-site-host.com/for-schools.html. Nothing in the pack is personalised advice.

2. Lesson summary

In the space of about a week in late October and early November 2026, the Food Standards Agency published official alerts on a Walkers sharing box, a Rubicon juice carton and a Baxters soup can. Headlines named the brands. The official notices named batch codes and dates — and those are what decide whether a pack in a cupboard is affected.

Students leave able to tell a withdrawal from a recall, name the three main FSA alert types, match a batch code and a date to a notice, and explain why undeclared allergens and a swollen can are different kinds of problem.

Suggested running order

- 0–8 min: hook — “If a brand is recalled, is every pack in the shop affected?” Take a show of hands, then play the film.
- 8–20 min: fact sheet in pairs — withdrawal vs recall; the three alert types; the 14 allergens.
- 20–40 min: label-reading activity (the fictional sharing-box label).
- 40–55 min: quiz (individual or teams). Take answers from the answer key.
- Plenary: one sentence — “The headline names the play; the batch code and date name the seat.”

3. Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners should be able to:

- Distinguish a food withdrawal from a food recall, in plain English.
- Name the Food Standards Agency’s three main public alert types (Allergy Alert, Product Recall Information Notice, and Food Alert for Action) and say what each is for.
- Explain why a recall of a named product does not automatically affect every pack of that product.

- Match a batch code and a best-before or use-by date to an official notice.
- Identify why undeclared wheat on an outer box, possible undeclared sulphites, and a can that may swell are different risks, using the official wording.
- Locate the 14 allergens that UK law requires to be emphasised in the ingredients list, and the sulphite declaration threshold of 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre (as total SO2).
- Find the official sign-up for FSA food safety alerts.

4. Sourced fact sheet

Withdrawal or recall?

A withdrawal takes a product off the shelves before you buy it. A recall asks customers to return it or throw it away. If you have already bought it, only a recall is trying to reach you. Source: FSA alert pages, “About allergy alerts” / “About product recalls” (checked 9 November 2026).

Three kinds of FSA alert

- Allergy Alert (AA) — allergen labelling is missing or wrong.
- Product Recall Information Notice (PRIN) — other problems, such as a fault or contamination.
- Food Alert for Action (FAFA) — tells local authorities to take specific action.

By 6 November 2026, this year’s published references had reached FSA-AA-51-2026 and FSA-PRIN-52-2026. Reference numbers are sequential; an update keeps the same number.

Case one — Walkers Variety Snacks Sharing Box (FSA-AA-50-2026)

On 30 October 2026 PepsiCo recalled the Walkers Variety Snacks Sharing Box, 655 g (6 packs), in England, Scotland and Wales. The Monster Munch Giants Roast Beef 85 g pack inside contains wheat (gluten) which is not declared on the outer box. The original notice listed best before 21 November 2026, batch 107543. Update 1 (last modified 1 November 2026) added a second best-before date, 16 January 2027, and replaced the original.

Why the outer box matters: the box is what you read in the shop. The allergen has to be declared on the pack you actually buy. FSA advice: if you have a wheat or gluten allergy or intolerance, or coeliac disease, do not eat it; contact PepsiCo Consumer Care on 0800 274 777 for a full refund.

Product	Pack	Batch	Best before
Walkers Variety Snacks Sharing Box	655 g (6 packs)	107543	21 Nov 2026; and 16 Jan 2027 (update 1)

Case two — Rubicon Yuzu & Pink Grapefruit 1 L (FSA-AA-51-2026)

On 4 November 2026 A.G. Barr recalled Rubicon Yuzu & Pink Grapefruit 1 litre cartons because they may contain undeclared sulphites. On 5 November the title was updated to add the words “because they may contain” — a risk, not a confirmed finding in every carton.

Batch	Best before
6160	June 2027
6198	July 2027

Batch	Best before
6219	August 2027
6257	September 2027

FSA advice: if you are sensitive to sulphur dioxide or sulphites, do not drink it; return it to the shop for a full refund.

Sulphites (sulphur dioxide) are preservatives. Most people tolerate them, but they can trigger breathing symptoms in some people with asthma or sulphite sensitivity. UK law requires them to be declared above 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre as total SO2. Source: Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 Annex II, item 12, retained in UK law.

The 14 allergens that must be emphasised

Under Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 Annex II and Article 21, retained in UK law, these must be emphasised in the ingredients list: cereals containing gluten; crustaceans; eggs; fish; peanuts; soybeans; milk; nuts; celery; mustard; sesame; sulphur dioxide / sulphites (above the threshold above); lupin; molluscs.

Case three — Baxters Chef Selections Cullen Skink 400 g (FSA-PRIN-52-2026)

On 6 November 2026 Baxters recalled Chef Selections Cullen Skink 400 g cans, batch L07XC, best before April 2029, in England and Wales. A manufacturing fault may cause spoilage, an unpleasant odour or flavour, swelling, and possible rupture. The official advice is: do not open the can; bag the full can; put it in an external bin; contact Baxters on 0800 389 8389 for a replacement.

What this pack does not claim

The FSA notice does not say anyone was harmed, and it does not mention botulism. Do not add either claim. “L” at the start of a lot mark is the usual prefix under the lot-marking rule retained from Directive 2011/91/EU, Article 4, unless the lot is otherwise clearly distinguishable.

Do people actually check?

An FSA Public Attitudes Tracker (Wave 19, fieldwork November 2019, n = 2,101) found that 25% of people were aware of a recall alert in the previous 12 months; of those who were aware, 67% took no action and 17% checked whether they had the product; 97% were not signed up for recall information.

Earlier FSA/Food Standards Scotland–commissioned research in 2017, as reported by The Grocer, found that only 1 in 20 consumers were aware they had bought a recalled product in the previous year, and 62% had seen no recall information that year. Treat this as a secondary report of that research.

The FSA Consumer Insights Tracker for January–March 2026 found that 44% had heard about food product recalls in February 2026, up from 34% in January, coinciding with high-profile infant formula recalls.

Official sign-up: https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-food-safety-alerts.

5. Label-reading activity

Work in pairs. You have a fictional outer box, invented for this lesson. It is not real Walkers packaging and should not be treated as a photograph of the recalled product.

Fictional outer box — “Sharing Variety Box, 655 g, 6 packs”

Front: “SHARING VARIETY BOX — 6 packs of your favourite snacks.” Back (small print): Best before 21 NOV 2026. Batch 107543. Ingredients list for the box as a whole: none printed. A line reads “See individual packs for ingredients and allergens.”

Tasks

- Is this pack within the official Walkers alert? Give two reasons (you need both a code and a date).
- What if the batch is 107543 but the best-before date is 3 March 2028? Affected, or not, on the published notice? Why?
- What if the date is 21 November 2026 but the batch is 108001?
- The inner 85 g roast-beef snack pack, in the official notice, contains wheat. The outer box in this activity does not declare it. Why does FSA treat that as an allergy-labelling problem even if the inner pack is labelled?
- Write one sentence you could put on a classroom poster: “A recall names the product. You must also match ___ and ___.”

Teacher note: for (2) and (3), the published notice requires both the batch and a listed date to match. Same name, same picture, different batch or date = not listed as affected. Recipes and notices can change; this is a reading exercise on the notice as published, not a rule for every future alert.

6. Quiz — 10 questions (student sheet)

Circle the best answer, or write a short reply where asked. You may use the fact sheet.

1. A withdrawal…

A. Asks customers to return a product they have already bought. B. Takes a product off the shelves before you buy it. C. Is the same as a recall. D. Only applies to allergens.

2. A recall…

A. Only tells shops to hide a product at the back. B. Asks customers to return or dispose of a product. C. Means every pack of that brand, ever made, is unsafe. D. Is only used for swollen cans.

3. Which FSA alert type is used when allergen labelling is missing or wrong?

A. Product Recall Information Notice. B. Food Alert for Action. C. Allergy Alert. D. Trading Standards circular.

4. What was missing from the outer Walkers sharing box, according to the official notice?

A. A best-before date. B. A declaration of wheat (gluten) in an inner pack. C. A barcode. D. A recycling logo.

5. The Rubicon recall was worded as “may contain” undeclared sulphites. That means:

A. Every carton was laboratory-confirmed to contain sulphites. B. The official notice describes a risk, not a confirmed finding in every carton. C. Sulphites are illegal in all soft drinks. D. The product was withdrawn, not recalled.

6. Above what level must sulphites be declared in UK labelling law, as total SO2?

A. Any trace at all. B. 1 mg/kg. C. 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre. D. 100 mg/kg.

7. How many allergens must be emphasised in the ingredients list under the retained 1169/2011 list?

A. 8 B. 12 C. 14 D. 20

8. The Baxters Cullen Skink notice advised people to:

A. Open the can and smell it. B. Boil the soup for ten minutes. C. Not open the can, bag it, put it in an external bin, and contact the company. D. Post it to the FSA.

9. In one sentence, why is a matching batch code and a matching date both needed on the Walkers notice?

10. In the 2019 FSA tracker, roughly what share of people who were aware of a recall alert took no action?

A. 17% B. 25% C. 67% D. 97%

7. Answer key (for the teacher)

1. B. A withdrawal takes the product off the shelves. A recall is the tool that tries to reach people who have already bought it. Source: FSA alert-page definitions.

2. B. A recall asks customers to return the product or follow the notice (sometimes to throw it away safely). It does not automatically cover every pack ever made.

3. C. Allergy Alert (AA).

4. B. Wheat (gluten) in the Monster Munch Giants Roast Beef 85 g inner pack was not declared on the outer box. FSA-AA-50-2026.

5. B. The updated title used “may contain”. That is a risk statement, not a claim that every carton was confirmed to contain sulphites. FSA-AA-51-2026.

6. C. 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/litre as total SO2. Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 Annex II, item 12, retained in UK law.

7. C. Fourteen. Annex II of the same regulation.

8. C. Do not open; bag the full can; external bin; contact Baxters (0800 389 8389) for a replacement. FSA-PRIN-52-2026. The notice does not mention botulism or confirmed harm.

9. Accept any clear sentence that says the official Walkers notice lists a specific batch (107543) and listed best-before dates; both have to match. The brand name alone is not enough.

10. C. 67% of those who were aware took no action. (17% checked; 25% were aware in the past year; 97% were not signed up.) FSA Public Attitudes Tracker Wave 19, November 2019.

8. Watch the film and read further

Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKkWRDYRBs — “Food Recalled? Why the Batch Code Matters More Than the Headline,” Plate Evidence, @PlateEvidence. Scheduled public release: 14 November 2026, 10:00 Europe/London.

Companion packs on Red 40 / UK dye-warning labels and the EU meat-names rule, and a school- or service-wide licence, are available by enquiry: https://headless-krsvewplfdd-carnivoremuscle-140f.wix-site-host.com/for-schools.html.

Primary sources

- FSA-AA-50-2026 and Update 1 — Walkers Variety Snacks Sharing Box: alerts.food.gov.uk/.../FSA-AA-50-2026-update-1
- FSA-AA-51-2026 — Rubicon Yuzu & Pink Grapefruit 1 L: alerts.food.gov.uk/.../FSA-AA-51-2026
- FSA-PRIN-52-2026 — Baxters Chef Selections Cullen Skink 400 g: alerts.food.gov.uk/.../FSA-PRIN-52-2026
- Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 Annex II (14 allergens; sulphite threshold), retained: legislation.gov.uk/eur/2011/1169/annex/II
- Directive 2011/91/EU on lot marking (retained), Article 4 — “L” prefix.
- FSA Public Attitudes Tracker Wave 19 (fieldwork November 2019).
- FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, January–March 2026: science.food.gov.uk/...
- Official alert sign-up: gov.uk/sign-up-for-food-safety-alerts

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