

Horse-Meat Fraud Scandal Erupts in France

By RUTH BENDER

PARIS—France was hit by a new horse-meat scandal Monday as police raided traders and wholesalers and arrested 21 people on suspicion that horses used in medicine production ended up illegally on consumers' plates.

French judicial authorities are looking into a suspected meat-trafficking ring that allegedly falsified documents to enter horses marked as unfit for consumption into the food chain, Brice Robin, prosecutor in the southern French city of Marseille, said Monday.

Mr. Robin sought to quell fears of a new sanitary scare, saying he had no evidence suggesting that humans who would have eaten meat from these horses were at risk.

The fraud suspicions come less than a year since a horse-meat scare erupted in Europe last February. Tons of horse meat had been discovered to have been mislabeled and sold as beef in ready-made meals, triggering concerns over the traceability of ingredients.

Mr. Robin said that, this time, horses used to incubate antibodies by pharmaceutical laboratories—including one from French giant **Sanofi SA**—ended up at a slaughter house in the city of Narbonne. Their meat was then allegedly sold by wholesalers to butchers in the region, he said.

Mr. Robin said Sanofi was a "victim" in this case, adding that he had granted the company the status of co-plaintiff in the probe.

The use of young horses allows Sanofi to make serums used to combat a variety of diseases, such as rabies, a spokesman for **Sanofi Pasteur**, the group's vaccines arm, said.

Sanofi typically uses the horses for three years and then sells them on to individuals, veterinary schools and professional horse traders for a "symbolic sum," he said.

The Marseille prosecutor said that early investigations found that the suspected trafficking ring made a gain of up to €300 on the sale of one horse.

Around 100 police officers participated in raids in 11 districts across the south of France as part of the probe led by a Marseille investigating magistrate, according to a police statement.

