

Fipronil in eggs (05/08/2017)

The public prosecutor's office, backed by the Food Agency, is currently investigating the use of Fipronil in the poultry sector. Fipronil is a prohibited substance in this sector and its use is thus illegal.

The judicial inquiry aims to get to the bottom of this illegal use of Fipronil. It is important to give the inquiry every chance of succeeding and, to this end, not furnish any information that might compromise its successful outcome. Needless to say, the FASFC fully respects the secrecy of the judicial inquiry.

Based on the information it received, the FASFC has taken the preventive measure of temporarily shutting down the laying hens establishments concerned. The FASFC has taken samples in all of these poultry farms, which are currently being analysed for the presence of Fipronil. In addition, these businesses had to inform their wholesale and retail clients, so that the latter could proceed to remove the eggs from their shelves. The FASFC sees to it that this product withdrawal actually takes place. Moreover, the communication on the Fipronil contamination and the ensuing withdrawal of the eggs from the market has also received plenty of press coverage.

The policy pursued regarding the measures to be taken is fully in line with the European guidelines regarding this matter, which were communicated to all member states via the RASFF system on 31 July.

Considering that the levels of Fipronil found in the eggs have thus far been considerably lower than the limit value agreed upon by the EU countries, a product recall similar to the one provided for in the public warning issued by the NVWA in the Netherlands is deemed unnecessary.

The situation can differ considerably between countries. In the Netherlands, the sector concerned is bigger (4x) and the poultry farms are also bigger, which might explain why they manage the contamination differently.

The latest test results in Belgium confirm the first reassuring results. As soon as all of the results for the blocked poultry farms are known, the FASFC will provide a general overview.

All non-compliant eggs are considered category 1 waste and must be destroyed accordingly, regardless of the fact that the levels of Fipronil thus far found do not pose a public health risk. Needless to say, Fipronil is an illegal substance which has no place in the food chain.

Poultry farms where Fipronil was detected in the eggs can only resume their activities after the FASFC has ascertained that the substance no longer poses a threat to the safety of the food chain. The poultry farmers concerned have to be able to prove, by means of checks, that their new eggs are free of Fipronil. Afterwards, the FASFC will revisit the farms concerned to take an official sample for analysis. Only if the findings of these analyses carried out by the FASFC corroborate that Fipronil is no longer present in the eggs, the measures imposed on the poultry farms will be lifted.

The investigation is still ongoing and is being conducted as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Should the analyses still yield results that exceed the limit value agreed upon by the EU countries, the consumers will, of course, be notified immediately and the necessary measures will be taken to ensure the safety of the food chain.

Any information brought to light by the investigation which might be useful to the other member states will be communicated without any delay.