

Melamine in animal feed: notification sent to stakeholders on 2 December 2008

URGENT ACTION: Melamine in Organic Soya Expeller for feed use from China – follow-up

Dear Colleague

I am writing in follow-up to our e-mail of Friday 28 November advising that melamine had been found in the UK in imports from the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) of organic soya expeller for feed use.

The Food Standards Agency has undertaken a risk assessment of the safety of products from animals that may have consumed melamine in organic soya expeller from the consignment in question. On the levels of melamine found, and taking account of the typical inclusion rates for organic soya expeller in finished feed -- up to 20% for ruminants and 10% for pigs and poultry -- it is thought unlikely that the consignment would give rise to harmful levels of residues of melamine in animal products for human consumption. However, in cases where the organic soya expeller has been included in the finished feed at higher rates, there may be uncertainty about milk and products which contain the milk from the dairy cows concerned. Our advice in these cases is that the milk and products which contain the milk should be quarantined and tested for the presence of melamine before entry to the human food chain.

Last year, the Commission introduced measures (which have since been rescinded) requiring the testing of imports from the PRC for melamine and melamine-related compounds (cyanuric acid, ammeline and ammelide). Another EU Member State has recently reported findings of these melamine-related compounds. We are attempting to establish with the Member State authority concerned whether this is a one-off finding in a particular consignment, or whether it is typical of supplies of soya expeller from the PRC.

Our advice to feed business operators therefore remains that -- in line with their responsibilities under Articles 15, 17, 18 and 20 of EC Regulation 178/2002 (see Related Links) on the general principles of food law -- they should cease all use of and quarantine any supplies from the PRC of soya expeller in their possession and have the material tested for the presence of melamine and melamine-related compounds (cyanuric acid, ammeline and ammelide). In view of the apparently widespread nature of the contamination of products from the PRC, feed business operators may wish to consider quarantining and testing any other animal feed products in their possession which originate from China before they are put into the feed chain.

We also consider that, in the present circumstances, it would be prudent for processors of organic milk to monitor incoming supplies of milk for the potential

presence of melamine and melamine-related compounds. Sampling results should be reported to the Food Standards Agency using the online report form on our website.

Advice from the Commission is that any product, including any animal feed product, found to contain melamine at above 2.5 mg/kg should be destroyed. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) advised in a statement on melamine and related compounds last year that the total concentration of melamine and related compounds should be used in risk assessments. In view of the findings in another Member State with respect to levels of cyanuric acid, ammeline and ammelide, it should be borne in mind that products with levels of melamine below 2.5 mg/kg may contain levels of the related compounds which take the total above that figure.

My previous e-mail of 28 November gave details of how to use the online reporting form, but for convenience I repeat these instructions here. Go to <https://incidents.foodapps.co.uk/IncidentReportForm/login.aspx> and select "Enter as guest", then click on "Incident Notification" and complete the boxes as appropriate.

The form can also be accessed from the front page of our website (<http://www.food.gov.uk/>) through the "Incident Form" link under the "Quick Links" heading on the bottom right, which will take you to a page with some highlighted text a third of the way down it; this is another link to the incident report form.

If you have any queries about the incident report form, or need assistance with completing it, please contact my colleague Drazenka Tubin-Delic in our Incidents Branch on 020 7276 8450.

Any questions about this e-mail should be directed to Joseph Nicholas in the Animal Feed Unit (e-mail <Joseph.Nicholas@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk> or telephone 020 7276 8462).

Yours faithfully

K MILLAR
Head of Animal Feed Unit