

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

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Information Paper

**REDUCING THE INCIDENCE AND LEVEL OF NICARBAZIN
RESIDUES IN BRITISH CHICKEN**

December 2008

REDUCING THE INCIDENCE AND LEVEL OF NICARBAZIN RESIDUES IN BRITISH CHICKEN

Issue

1. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) facilitated an initiative in partnership with a number of industry representatives during 2007 to help reduce the levels of nicarbazin residues in British poultry. The initiative also aimed to raise awareness of the issue throughout industry.

Background

2. Nicarbazin is a specified feed additive used for the treatment of coccidiosis, a potentially fatal and debilitating disease of chickens. Nicarbazin is available in the form of the feed additive *Maxiban*.

3. The FSA routinely evaluates the results of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's (VMD's) surveillance of coccidiostats including nicarbazin in foodstuffs, and considers that levels currently found in British chicken are not a significant food safety risk. However, consumers expect these residue levels to be kept to a minimum and they are avoidable with good farm practice. Industry also recognises that consumers require assurances that the poultry meat they eat contains the lowest possible residues of feed additives.

4. Levels of detectable nicarbazin in British chicken have been falling in recent years. One significant factor in the reduction of residues is a training programme organised by Elanco Animal Health (the manufacturers of *Maxiban*).

The joint government/industry initiative

5. Members of the project group included representatives of the British Poultry Council, the National Farmers Union and Elanco Animal Health. From February 2007 until January 2008, broiler farms sampled in GB under the VMD's Statutory Surveillance programme were sent a questionnaire from a project coordinator seeking information about their feed management practices. The study focused in particular on what was happening when sampled birds were being raised. A similar study was conducted in NI, which also took samples of the feed last fed.

6. The results of the study identified several possible factors concerning sampled farms feed storage and distribution management systems as likely causes of detectable nicarbazin residues in chicken. Key recommendations include:

- maintain current best practice advice;
- train staff on the use of nicarbazin on farms;
- ensure farmers are aware of the precise amounts of nicarbazin feed required; and
- ensure that both single and double bins are emptied of any remaining nicarbazin-containing feed before the five days withdrawal period.

7. The initiative represents an innovative example of partnership working with industry. FSA are very grateful for the support received from the partners in this initiative. It is hoped that the recommendations from this project will be taken into account in best practice for nicarbazin use and general feed management on-farm so that the incidence and levels found are reduced further.

8. The results of the initiative were published by the FSA in mid-May 2008.

The report can be found at

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/nicarbazinresidues.pdf>

Current position

9. The Agency will continue to work with the poultry sector to publicise the recommendations from the initiative to poultry farmers. Early results from the VMD's statutory surveillance programme for 2008 indicate that levels of nicarbazin are still being found in chicken.

10. The Agency is working closely with industry to develop an e-leaflet (that will be available on websites, sent by email and printed out as a poster) that communicates the key recommendations directly to farmers and their managers. This will help further increase awareness regarding nicarbazin and encourage UK industry to follow good practice so that the incidence and levels of nicarbazin currently found can be further reduced.