

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

44th Meeting of ACAF on 3 December 2008

Information Paper

Melamine Contamination of Feed

Secretariat: December 2008

ACAF INFORMATION PAPER – MELAMINE CONTAMINATION OF FEED

Purpose

1. This paper seeks to update the Committee about melamine contamination of food and feed.

Background

2. Melamine contamination of pet food was first raised as an issue in the EC Developments paper for the ACAF meeting of 5 June 2007 (ACAF/07/10). The Committee was informed that the European Commission had been notified about a North American pet food manufacturer that was recalling pet food due to an apparent link between the food and kidney failure in cats and dogs. The pet food contained wheat gluten originating from The People's Republic of China that appeared to be contaminated with melamine. While it has been claimed that this substance is a metabolite of the pesticide cyromazine, it was not clear at that time whether this was the origin of the contamination.
3. The Committee received an update at its meeting of 11 September 2007 in the EC Developments paper (ACAF/07/19). The Commission had requested that Member States carry out increased surveillance for the presence of melamine and structurally related compounds (such as cyanuric acid) in consignments of protein isolates from China.
4. The Food Standards Agency participated in a melamine in feed monitoring programme in 2007. There was one instance of melamine contamination of feed in the UK – a consignment of rice protein sampled in Northern Ireland by DARD in July 2007. The Agency issued a rapid alert (RASFF) notification to the Commission and other Member States concerning the incident. The material in question was removed from the feed/food chain and safely disposed of.
5. ACAF received a further update on this subject in the EC Developments paper for its meeting of 4 December 2007 (ACAF/07/26). The Committee was informed that the UK had found no further cases of melamine contamination of animal feed. In October 2007, the Commission and Member States had agreed to discontinue the increased surveillance for the presence of melamine and structurally-related compounds in protein isolates. The control measures put in place in China for this feed material were considered to be adequate to prevent further adulteration of these protein isolates intended for export.

6. There have been no feed incidents involving melamine reported in the UK this year. The Food Standards Agency reminded feed authorities at the beginning of this financial year, to include checks on protein isolates originating from China for the presence of melamine as part of their routine surveillance activities.

Recent developments

7. In early October 2008 the European Commission informed Member States of the contamination of composite food products containing milk and milk products from China. It was understood that melamine had been added to milk produced in China (in order to boost the nitrogen levels, and to increase the apparent protein content). Some of the contaminated milk had been used to manufacture infant formulae and other dairy-based products. As a result of this contamination, it was reported that approximately 53,000 infants had suffered illnesses (including about 158 cases of acute kidney failure), with 13,000 hospitalisations and four deaths. Chinese authorities had disclosed that, in addition to discovering the presence of melamine in infant formulae, melamine had been discovered in 24 of 1202 samples of milk and yogurt.

8. Imports of milk and milk products, including milk powder, originating from China are currently not allowed to be imported into the Community. However, certain composite products that might contain these ingredients, such as biscuits and chocolate, can still be legally imported from China. In the light of this, the EC adopted revised safeguard measures (Commission Decision 2008/798/EC) on 8 October 2008. The Decision, which came into force on 15 October 2008, requires the testing of all composite food and feed products from China containing milk products. Products found to contain more than 2.5 mg/kg melamine have to be withdrawn from the market and destroyed. The Decision can be found at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:273:0018:0020:EN:PDF>

9. The Food Standards Agency has advised local authorities and food and feed businesses to make the necessary checks and report results to the Agency. Food and feed business operators have the responsibility to ensure that the food and feed that they supply is safe and have a requirement in accordance with Articles 19 and 20 of Regulation 178/2002 to inform enforcement authorities of results where this limit is exceeded. The letters sent to advise stakeholders can be found at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/melamineletter171008.pdf>

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/enfe08064update3.pdf>

10. While the apparent adulteration of food products originating from China is of deep concern, there are no new reports of melamine contaminated feeds in the UK. On 24 November 2008 the Agency was notified by the Netherlands (via the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)) of a contamination incident concerning soy meal intended for feed use. However, none of the material in question had been sent to the UK. At meetings with stakeholders officials continue to stress the importance of continued vigilance, and the Animal Feed Unit has been working with Agency colleagues to help ensure that food products contaminated with melamine are not used in feed for livestock or companion animals. The Secretariat will ensure that the Committee is kept informed of further significant developments.

**ACAF Secretariat
December 2008**