

RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 15 March 2012

on the monitoring of the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed and food

(Text with EEA relevance)

(2012/154/EU)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Directive 2002/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 May 2002 on undesirable substances in animal feed ⁽¹⁾ provides that the use of products intended for animal feed which contain levels of undesirable substances exceeding the maximum levels laid down in Annex I thereto is prohibited.
- (2) A maximum level of 1 000 mg/kg of rye ergot (*Claviceps purpurea*) sclerotia has been established for feed containing unground cereals.
- (3) The Scientific Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted an opinion on a request from the Commission related to ergot as undesirable substance in animal feed on 19 April 2005 ⁽²⁾.
- (4) The term ergot refers to fungal structures from *Claviceps* species developing instead of kernels on grain ears or seeds on grass heads, being visible as large dark coloured sclerotia. These sclerotia contain different classes of alkaloids, the most prominent being ergometrine, ergotamine, ergosine, ergocristine, ergocryptine and ergocornine and their related -inines. The amount and toxin pattern vary between fungal strains, depending on the host plant and the geographical region.
- (5) At present, the degree of variability in ergot alkaloid pattern in relation to fungal species, geographical distribution as well as in relation to the host plant (for example, the alkaloid pattern in rye ergot is different from that in other grass ergot) is not known. More data would be needed to identify all factors responsible for the variability in ergot alkaloid pattern in individual plant species.
- (6) The physical determination of the contamination rate of cereals by rye ergot is often inaccurate, as size and weight of the sclerotia may vary considerably. Moreover, this physical determination is impossible in processed feed and food. Hence, it has been suggested to provide in addition to control by physical methods also the possibility to control by chemical analysis of potentially contaminated feed and food, as various chromatographic methods are available to detect ergot alkaloids in feed and food. The methods are confined, however, to a selected number of ergot alkaloids.
- (7) It is necessary to generate more data on the presence of these ergot alkaloids, not only in unground cereals but also in cereal products and compound feed and food and to obtain reliable data on the ergot alkaloid pattern in feed and food and to relate the presence of ergot alkaloids to the amount of sclerotia present. It is appropriate to focus this monitoring on the six predominantly present ergot alkaloids, i.e. ergometrine, ergotamine, ergosine, ergocristine, ergocryptine and ergocornine and their related -inines,

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

1. Member States should perform with the active involvement of the feed and food business operators monitoring on the presence of ergot alkaloids in cereals and cereal products intended for human consumption or intended for animal feeding, in pasture/forage grasses for animal feeding and in compound feed and food.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 140, 30.5.2002, p. 10.

⁽²⁾ Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Contaminants in Food Chain on a request from the Commission related to ergot as undesirable substance in animal feed, *EFSA Journal* (2005)225, 1-27. http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/scdocs/doc/contam_op_ej225_ergot_en1.pdf

2. Member States should analyse the samples for at least the following ergot alkaloids:

- ergocristine/ergocristinine,
- ergotamine/ergotaminine,
- ergocryptine/ergocryptinine,
- ergometrine/ergometrinine,
- ergosine/ergosinine,
- ergocornine/ergocorninine.

3. Member States should determine, whenever possible, simultaneously the sclerotia content in the sample in order to be able to improve the knowledge on the relation between the content of sclerotia and the level of individual ergot alkaloids.

4. The analytical results should be provided on a regular basis to EFSA for compilation into a database.

Done at Brussels, 15 March 2012.

For the Commission
John DALLI
Member of the Commission
