

Fipronil egg contamination around the globe

The scandal over poison eggs has affected a number of countries in recent months. Poultry farms in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, and other members of the European Union were first found to have used the insecticide – fipronil, with batches of eggs contaminated. Taiwan and South Korea also reported cases of fipronil residue in their eggs as well.

The Centre for Food Safety in Hong Kong held and tested at import level a consignment of eggs imported from Belgium and found that three samples contained fipronil at levels exceeding the legal limit. The product concerned has been marked and sealed by the Centre and has not entered the market.



What is fipronil?

Fipronil is an insecticide used to kill fleas, ticks and ants. It is also an active ingredient in many veterinary products. The chemical was suspected to be used inappropriately as disinfectants and in treatments against lice in poultry farms around the globe. The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified fipronil as a moderately hazardous class II pesticide, and long-term exposure to such compound can cause damage to kidney, liver and thyroid gland.

International regulation for fipronil

The European Regulation (EC) No. 396/2005 stipulates the maximum residue level (MRL) for fipronil at 0.005 mg/kg (5 ppb); Both the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in Japan and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in South Korea peg the value at 20 ppb; And the Environmental Protection Agency of the USA is most lenient with MRL for fipronil at 30 ppb.

STC (The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre), a not-for-profit, independent testing, inspection and certification organization with over 50 years of experience in consumer product testing, provides comprehensive chemical testing services for importers and distributors of eggs, including testing for fipronil to the standards of the European Union, the United States, and Japan, among other places.

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