

Advice 05-2020 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on the reassessment of the action limit for thiouracil in cattle urine.

Terms of reference

Within the framework of the control plan of the FASFC on thyrostatic substances (anti-thyroid agents - A2 substances under the terms of Directive 96/23/EC now replaced by Regulation 2017/625), the Scientific Committee is asked to re-assess the action limit of 10 µg/L (or ppb) for thiouracil in bovine urine, as included in the rapid advice 12-2011 of the SciCom (given following an isolated case of non-conformity).

Thiouracil is a thyrostatic drug and its use is prohibited in livestock because of its potential carcinogenic and teratogenic properties. Thiouracil causes weight gain by water retention in tissues (especially muscles) as a result of the inhibition of thyroid hormone production. Thiouracil residues in urine may give rise to suspicion of illegal use for fattening (exogenous administration) but may also result from ingestion via food (food origin) of cruciferous plants (*Brassicaceae*). It is important for the correct interpretation of the presence of thiouracil residues in urine to take the latter into account.

Method

This opinion is based on experts opinion, on data from the scientific literature, on results of the Thyreomerk project (RF 12/6260) funded by the Contractual Research of the FPS Public Health, Safety of the Food Chain and Environment, on data from the control plan of the FASFC and on results of its National Investigation Unit as well as on EFSA reports on the monitoring of residues of veterinary medicinal products and other substances in live animals and animal products.

Conclusions

Taking into account the new scientific data, new scientific knowledge from the Thyreomerk project and from the Belgian and European control plans, the Scientific Committee considers that the action limit for thiouracil in bovine urine can be increased to 30 µg/L (ppb) in order to take into account the new knowledge on the natural occurrence of thiouracil in bovine urine (food origin) and to detect the fraudulent use of this substance as targeted as possible.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french.