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The Management of Eggs Containing Fipronil Problem in Taiwan

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INTRODUCTION

After the EU fipronil scandal on 11th of August 2017, the Council of Agriculture (COA) started to collect eggs from all layer farms on 19th of August. 3% of 1451 farms are contaminated with fipronil. 1.57 million eggs are destroyed or used as fertilizers.

Taiwan's eggs market and business model

33 million layers are counted in records, including 13 million pullets. 28 million layers in total are in production in September 2017, and about 1 million layers are eliminated monthly. In Taiwan, the farmers sell the eggs by weight and ship eggs by boxes which are 12 kg each. The data shows 100,000 to 105,000 boxes per day on average from the production side. Due to farmers not able to sell the eggs to customers directly, there are middlemen for collecting eggs from the farmers and shipping to consumer's markets. Some of them clean and grade eggs in small package (6, 8 and 10 eggs per unit), and some do only distribution and shipping. Roughly 30% of eggs are cleaned and graded. Presently, Taiwan is one of the few countries still record daily production of eggs in trading by boxes. Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and China are counting and trading by units of eggs. Each tray contains 30 eggs which is used to support and protect eggs during shifting or shipping.

When new layer farms start producing eggs, they have to prepare enough egg boxes for 3-5 days egg production, and the egg boxes are picked up and shipped by middlemen. The existence of middlemen in eggs selling system forces farmers to keep 3 or more generations of layers in one single farm. The only purpose is to have sufficient supply of eggs all year round.

If there are no eggs or less production, middlemen will stop collecting eggs from farmers.

Fipronil use on layers

Due to multi-generations hens raised in farms, diseases are the major issues that need to be controlled. 90% of layer farms in Taiwan are traditional open house farm. Flies and lice are major ectoparasites problems in summer time. Temperature over 30 degree Celsius is very common, which also leads to less feed intake and water intake, and it has significantly reduced the egg production rate. The eggs price is only 24NTD/600g in August 2017, which means low profit, diseases and poor eggs outcome makes it necessary for farmers to find

cheaper items/solutions to control the parasites or other unexpected diseases. Fipronil is a common pesticide, which is not allowed to use in commercial animals. Farmers use fipronil because it is the cheapest and also effective for parasites control.

The COA's quick action to tackle fipronil

After the UN fipronil scandal in early August, the Council of Agriculture (COA) immediately issued an executive order to local government and National Animal Industry Foundation to collect egg samples from 1,451 farms nationwide. 3 % of farms are found using fipronil. As it is mentioned before, there is an egg distribution system between farmers and consumers. 44 farms, which have 1.24 million layers, are monitored, and 700,000 to 800,000 eggs are recovered from the farm side.

CONCLUSION

There is no data showing how many eggs were released into consumer market. 1.24 million layers X 80% egg production rate= 992,000 eggs per day. If we consider 1 week production amount containing fipronil, which are approximately 7 million eggs contaminated, we have 1/10 of eggs recovered. However, 90% of eggs suspected of containing fipronil eggs are not able to be traced back. Rebuilding consumer trust is the most difficult task. Quick action from the government is no doubt commendable, and the next stage will be damage control.

REFERENCES

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