

# Fipronil in eggs





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# Fipronil in eggs: **public health risk?**

## SCIENTIFIC FACTS

- World Health Organisation (WHO) Class II: "**moderately hazardous**", no **genotoxic or carcinogenic** demonstrated (EFSA)\*
- **Not authorised in Food producing animals**
- **Detection Limit: 0.005 mg/Kg** in chicken eggs and meat. Correspond to MRL (Maximum Residue limits)\*\*
- **Potential Health risk for levels > 0,72 mg/kg** in eggs and egg-products.

## TOXICITY

To reach the level of toxicity, a **person of 80Kg** would need to eat at least **17 jumbo eggs per day**.  
A child of 15kg, **3 eggs per day**.



## **Public Health risk considered to be low**

Only 3 samples out of more than thousands controlled presented levels above 0.72 mg/kg of Fipronil.  
These Eggs have been withdrawn and farms are under strict controls

\* European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Conclusion regarding the peer review of the pesticide risk assessment of the active substance fipronil (2006)

\*\* Reg. (EU) 2016/2035, Reg. (EU) No 540/2011, Reg. (EU) No 781/2013



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# Fraudulent Scheme

(Ongoing judicial investigation BE, NL and DE)

**Company (BE)**

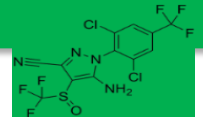
Makes illegal products for poultry by mixing fipronil in legally marketed products:  
Some products labelled as "natural extracts"

Sold by a Romanian trader to

**FIPRONIL**

legal substance authorised as:

- veterinary medicinal products for **pets**
- Biocide but not for food producing animals
- Pesticides for seeds → ending Sept 2017



**Who knew ?  
Who is Responsible ?**



**Pest-control Companies**

**Poultry Farms**  
(disinfected)

**Poultry Farms**  
Buying directly

**Egg and Egg-products**



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## Economic Interest: Adulteration with Fipronil

### Company



Mixing an extremely effective insecticide/acaricide (fipronil) in legal products which have no effects on red mites.  
Competing with legally authorised products to fight against Red mite

### Pest-control Companies



By using a very effective, adulterated product, they gain market shares over the other pest-control companies.  
Fipronil allows less treatments per year (vs. phoxim: 4-6 treatments).

### Chicken farmers

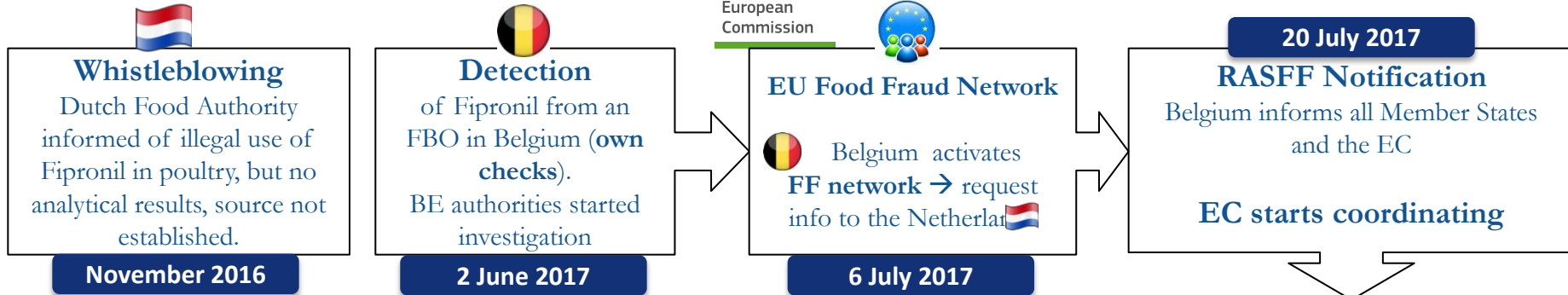


They get rid of red-mite, an ectoparasite of poultry which feeds on chicken's blood causing anaemia and animal stress. If untreated, a massive infestation can compromise the health of the hen

➔ no eggs = economic loss.



# Timeline and Food Fraud Criteria



## 1. Violation of EU Food Law

- Fipronil is **prohibited for food producing animals**

## 2. Intention

- Responsibility to be determined** by judicial investigation (who knew? manufacturer, pest control business, farmers?)
- Fipronil illegally added

## 3. Economic Gain

- Fipronil is very effective: **few treatments needed vs. other authorised veterinary medicinal products**
- Competitive advantage for pest-control companies using it**

## 4. Customer Deception

- Consumer's food scare: loss of confidence**
- Agro-industry paying recall/withdrawal/destruction (difficulties with processed products)**
- Decrease in Egg consumption?**
- Farmers:**
  - +suspension of production
  - +contaminated hens (quarantine/euthanize)
  - +destruction of eggs

- ### Actions taken
- Shared info on applicable Maximum Residues Levels and measures to be taken on illegally treated farms
  - Note on Fipronil shared to EU global partners
  - EU-wide monitoring exercise on the possible use of illegal substances
  - Measures to avoid that contaminated products or animal by products find their way into animal feed and in the food chain
  - Judicial investigation in NL, BE and DE
  - Member States adopt national plans to monitor the production of egg products

Impact on  
26 Member States  
23 Third Countries



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# Outcome of Ministerial meeting 26 September

- **Commission and Member States agree on concrete measures against food fraud.**
- ***Main strategic and systematic actions needed at Member State and EU-level:***
  - **improve risk communication between MS and Commission making sure it reaches the general public in a more coherent and swift way;**
  - **ensure rapid common risk assessment when such situations emerge;**
  - **bridge the gap between the use of RASFF and AAC;**
  - **consider how to establish a 'food safety officer' in each Member State to make sure information flows as fast and as efficient as possible;**
  - **capacity building activities including trainings and regular crisis exercises.**



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# Lessons Learned

1. Fipronil contamination incident is **not a public health issue**, but was perceived as such. Communication issue.
2. Fipronil was found **by own control of a company and it was not picked up/detected by the official control monitoring programmes in place** (veterinary drug residues/pesticide residues).
3. **Use** of Administrative Assistance and Cooperation System (AAC) and the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). **Connection** between systems and networks.
4. **Secrecy of judicial investigations** can hinder Public health Transparency.
5. Is there a systematic check if alerts on prohibited substances reported in RASFF are related to isolated contamination cases or if it relates to a more extensive/wider use of illegal practice ?
6. Need for a "coordinated approach and commitment by MS to take measures in line with the coordinated approach.