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Residue control in the European Union, the present and future challenges: Experiences from the Netherlands

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Abstract

Residue control in the European Union has the primary goal to protect consumers from intolerable health hazards which may be associated with residues of veterinary drugs or non-licensed or forbidden substances in animal products. The present situation regarding residue control in the EU is discussed. In the near future Directive 96/23 will be revised and residue monitoring will become more risk based, which will present challenges to laboratories. What are the new risks (compounds), and how can these be effectively identified and controlled? Techniques and matrices will change in the coming years to accommodate this new monitoring system.

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1. The European residue control system

According to Council Directive 96/23/EC[3], the European residue legislation provides for the establishment of a hierarchically structured system of European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs), National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) and Official Laboratories (OLs)[1]. It also commits the Member States to establish a National Residue Control Plan. Official control in the EU is based also on Regulation EC No. 882/2004[2] on the official

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controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.

For analysis, the samples should be in compliance with internationally approved procedures and supported by a network of laboratories. The cornerstones (Fig. 1) for residue control consist of a network of laboratories, analytical methods based on performance criteria and quality assurance systems and accreditation. The official laboratories can be either public laboratories, private laboratories or laboratories within Academia. However, they have to be designated by the competent authority in the Member State. They have the task of analysing samples and for this they have to be in accordance with EN/ISO/IEC/17025. They are assisted by NRLs. These NRLs have the task to develop routine methods for monitoring, perform the Quality Assurance for the OLs and coordinate the exchange of information between the OLs. For each task, one NRL is appointed. The NRLs are assisted by the EURLs. There is one EURL for each task. The tasks for the EURL are described in the EU legislation. EURLs act as an interface between the European Commission and the NRLs for technical issues, they develop confirmatory methods, support the Quality Assurance in the NRLs by, for example, organization of Proficiency Testing, they perform arbitration analysis and are a contact for Third Countries.

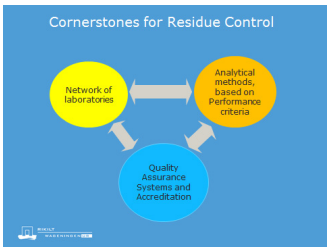

Fig. 1. Cornerstones of Residue control.

2. Results of residue control in the European Union

All Member States are required to report findings from National Residue Control Plans to Brussels before the 1st of April of the following year. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) compiles all these data in overall reports. However, the publication of these reports is not very timely; the 2012 report is the latest published[4]. The 2013 report will be shortly available[4a]. In 2012 and 2013, overall, 772540 and 1005835 samples, respectively, were analysed by 27 Member States, and 427193 and 419528, respectively, were collected under 96/23 Commission Decision for residue control. In total 1071 (2012) and 1443 (2013) non-compliant samples were reported. RIKILT, as a EURL, annually evaluates group A hormonal growth promoters. Table 1 shows an overview for the last 3 years.

Table 1. Non-compliant (NC) results in the EU for group A1-A4 compounds. Reproduced from EURL RIKILT data presented during annual workshop, June 2015.

Substance groups	NC 2012	Number of MS	NC 2013	Number of MS	NC 2014	Number of MS
A1 Stilbenes	0	0	3	2	1	1
A2 Antithyroid agents	36	8	68	9	54	7
A3 Steroids						
Androgens	40	3	49	4	50	7
Natural Hormones	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oestrogens	0	0	0	0	9	1
Gestagens	0	0	0	0	0	0

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