



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA Clears Swine for Processing** *Human Health Risk Assessment Updated*

WASHINGTON, May 15, 2007 - Testing confirms that meat from swine fed rations supplemented with pet food scraps containing melamine and related compounds is safe for human consumption, prompting the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow swine held on farms to be released and approved for processing.

Testing of meat from swine exposed to the feed in question confirms that melamine and melamine compounds does not accumulate in pork and is filtered out of the body by the action of the kidneys. The testing also bolsters the conclusions reached by a human health risk assessment that there is a very low risk of human illness from the consumption of meat from animals exposed to the feed in question. Swine known to have eaten this feed appear healthy, which will be confirmed as these animals undergo the rigorous inspection that FSIS provides for all meat and poultry prior to processing.

There were approximately 56,000 swine that consumed the feed in question and were held on farms in California, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, Kansas, Utah and Illinois. USDA will provide compensation to producers for certain additional costs incurred as a result of voluntarily holding the animals. Approximately 100 million swine are processed each year in the U.S.

The process for testing meat from swine was validated by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

### **Human Health Risk Assessment**

The human health risk assessment announced by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and USDA last week has been updated. It still concludes that there is very low risk of harm to humans from eating food containing low levels of melamine or related compounds.

The updated risk assessment concludes that in the most extreme risk assessment scenario, when scientists assumed that all the solid food a person consumes in an entire day contained melamine and the melamine compound cyanuric acid at levels potentially present in the meat, the potential exposure is about 250 times lower than the dose considered safe. Translated to consumption levels, this means that a person weighing 132

pounds would have to eat more than 800 pounds per day of pork or other food containing melamine and its compounds to approach a level of consumption that would cause a health concern. Previously, the agencies reported that the potential exposure was about 2,500 times lower than the safe level.

The initial human risk assessment assumed that tests of swine meat detected melamine and its compounds. The testing validation process, completed on May 12, revealed that while the swine meat test detects melamine, it cannot detect melamine related compounds. The updated assessment calculates risk based on the new updated laboratory information that accounts for the presence of melamine and cyanuric acid, a melamine related compound detected in the contaminated feed.

In addition, the original risk assessment assumed that testing could detect levels of melamine and related compounds as low as 10 parts per billion (ppb) in pork. The new assessment assumes that testing can detect levels only as low as 50 ppb in pork, a more conservative assumption, and an even higher level of 100 ppb is assumed in order to account for the potential presence of cyanuric acid, in addition to melamine.

FDA and USDA are in the process of identifying scientific experts who would be charged with reviewing the updated risk assessment. They will be asked to provide their views to FDA as quickly as possible, with the intent of finalizing the risk assessment within several weeks.

#### **Update on Other Affected Products**

Approximately 80,000 poultry continue to be held at USDA's request at farms in Indiana while a validated test for detecting melamine in poultry meat is developed. That test is expected later this week.

FDA is continuing its investigation into the presence of melamine and its compounds in fish feed manufactured by the Canadian company Skretting. The company is recalling all fish feed from all commercial fisheries and fish hatcheries that may have received it, including those in the United States. FDA has confirmed there are two U.S. commercial aquaculture establishments that received the feed. The fish in those two establishments are on hold and samples of the fish and the feed are being tested for melamine levels. Based on the human risk assessment, there is very low risk from eating fish that consumed feed containing melamine.

USDA and FDA continue to conduct a full and comprehensive investigation. As additional information is confirmed, updates will be provided and decisions will be made using the best available science to protect the public's health.

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