

# PRESS RELEASE BY THE VETERINARY REGULATION DIRECTORATE AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORATE

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## ***All farms resulted free from Fipronil residue***

On 30<sup>th</sup> August the VPRD received the first notification from the Environmental Health Directorate, which had received the positive results of eggs collected from shops and supermarkets from 5 local laying hen farms and from 2 Italian farms.

On the same day, the 5 farms were placed under restrictions and all sale of fresh eggs from these farms was held.

On 5<sup>th</sup> September, eggs in shell, muscle and fat samples were collected from these five suspect farms and sent to an accredited laboratory in Germany for analysis of Fipronil and Amitraz (pesticides). Three of these farms resulted positive to Fipronil contamination in the egg samples. The restriction on the three egg laying hen farms was confirmed whereas the two farms which resulted negative for such tests, received a letter from VRD lifting the ban for selling the eggs.

In the meantime, VRD, following the Commission guidelines, decided to test all the remaining other commercial egg-laying hen farms, including those for which eggs were sampled at retail by the Environmental Health Directorate. In all, 21 egg samples, 22 muscle/fat samples and 28 feed samples were sent for Fipronil and Amitraz analysis on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. All feed samples from all local farms resulted free from residues of these pesticides. All egg samples and muscle/fat samples from all other local egg-laying hen farms resulted negative in Fipronil and Amitraz residues on the 12<sup>th</sup> September. Having carried out such comprehensive analysis, Malta is to date the only Member state which has covered testing of all commercial farms.

The remaining three contaminated farms were monitored and egg samples were collected weekly and sent to Germany and UK for repeated analysis for Fipronil. Samples were collected weekly over a six-week period from the 11<sup>th</sup> September until the 16<sup>th</sup> October, until all farms resulted as having no Fipronil residue above the EU established MRL of 0.005mg/kg and therefore confirmed fit for human consumption.

A liquid biocide used by the farmers was also sent for analysis to UK, to confirm that no Fipronil content was present in the product. VRD was in constant contact with the Superintendence of Public Health communicating results of analysis and investigations; whenever a farm resulted negative, the Environmental Health Directorate was informed in order to allow the negative farms to place eggs on the market, and the VRD would like to thank all the Maltese farmers for their cooperation. VRD would also like to stress that as already communicated by the Public Health authorities, the level of Fipronil in eggs was not a health hazard at normal levels of consumption of eggs per day (max 2 eggs/day) but it was necessary to guarantee that eggs had to be placed on the market without any trace of biocides. All the Maltese produced eggs now fully comply with such requirements.

