

SAFEMEAT INFORMATION SHEET

Warning on Chemical Residue Risks from use of Sugarcane Tops and Trash as Stock Feed

Disclaimer

This information sheet summarises key points in relation to chemical residues and other risks that may arise from feeding sugarcane tops and trash to livestock. It does not constitute a recommendation on the use of sugarcane tops and trash as stock feed.

Anyone considering the use of sugarcane tops and trash as a stock feed should not make that decision without fully understanding the scope and limitations of any assessment mentioned below as well as the legal and marketing implications of their decision. Professional advice may be required to fully appreciate and address these matters.

Risk Assessment

SAFEMEAT has considered and reviewed an assessment of the potential for feeding sugarcane tops and trash to livestock to cause unacceptable chemical residues in those livestock. A copy of the assessment is available from www.safemeat.com.au.

Key Residue Issues

Scope and Limitations

The assessment may generally be considered a first tier estimate used to identify chemicals for further investigation. Refining the assumptions used may resolve concerns regarding the potential for residues. It was assumed that only chemicals registered for use on sugarcane at the time of the assessment were applied to crops from which the sugarcane tops and trash were derived¹. The assessment also assumed that these chemicals were applied in accordance with industry best practice and that all label directions and withholding periods were observed. The level of incorporation into the diet used in the assessment may be considered unrealistically high. More detail on the methodology and assumptions used is available in a summary of assessments for a variety of crops and the body of assessment (see www.safemeat.com.au).

The occurrence of any unacceptable residues will depend on various factors. These include the chemicals applied to the crop(s) from which the sugarcane tops and trash were derived, whether those chemicals were applied in accordance with label directions, whether statutory withholding periods were observed and what the actual interval between applications and harvest were for all chemical treatments, and the level of sugarcane tops and trash in the animal's diet. (Details of the chemicals applied to crops that are later processed off-farm are not usually available to the processor.)

¹ Other contaminants may be present in plant processing by-products. Potential sources of such contaminants include spray drift onto the parent crop from nearby chemical applications, contamination by soil (particularly soil containing residues of persistent organochlorine chemicals), post-harvest treatments and from transport or storage in contaminated containers. The presence or absence of such contaminants can only be determined by specific laboratory testing.

SAFEMEAT Consideration

The assessment indicates that the potential for unacceptable residues in export meat and offal arising from feeding sugarcane tops and trash to cattle and sheep needs further investigation and/or the development of risk management strategies for the following chemicals:

Picloram and terbutryn.

Adequate data were not located to enable an assessment to be made for the following compounds:
Fluroxypyr.

Producers should check the APVMA website for lists of registered products containing these active constituents. Enter the name of the active constituent in the search table at:

<http://services.apvma.gov.au/PubcrisWebClient/welcome.do>

Legal and Marketing Considerations

Some chemicals currently registered for use on sugarcane carry label directions that prohibit the feeding to livestock of by-products from treated crops.

Anyone considering the use of sugarcane tops and trash as stockfeed should check the legal implications of such label directions with the authority responsible for regulating the use of pesticides in their state or territory².

Question 7 on the NVD for cattle and Question 5 on the NVD for sheep and lambs may also be relevant. These questions seek information on the chemical treatment history of any pasture, crop, stubble, grain or fodder grazed or fed to stock in the 60 days prior to sale. If these materials have been fed within that period, and its chemical treatment history is unknown, then a “Don’t know” answer may be appropriate for sheep. For cattle, the explanatory notes to the NVD indicate that if the treatment history of the stockfeed was not known the correct response to Question 7 is “Yes”.

Livestock buyers may discriminate against cattle that have been fed by-product stock feeds and stock that have grazed or been fed any pasture, crop, stubble, grain or fodder with an unknown chemical treatment history in the 60 days prior to sale.

False or misleading answers on NVDs may result in criminal prosecution and/or civil action.

Risk Management

The livestock residue assessment generally indicates that, after 60 days on residue free feed, stock previously fed sugarcane tops and trash are anticipated to meet Australian and international residue standards for chemicals that were registered for use on sugarcane at the time the assessment was completed.

Further Information

For more information on preventing chemical residues in livestock and livestock products contact your Primary Industries, Agriculture Department or in NSW your Rural Lands Protection Board.

² In most states/territories this is the Primary Industries or Agriculture Department. In NSW it is the Department of Environment and Conservation.