

Monitoring of ergot alkaloids in animal feed

Published by AGRINFO on 08 Jul 2026

European Commission recommends EU Member States and feed business operators to monitor ergot alkaloids in animal feed

Commission Recommendation (EU) [2026/1243](#) of 11 June 2026 on monitoring the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed

Update

The European Commission has published a Recommendation to EU Member States and feed business operators on monitoring the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed. This Recommendation to collect data follows concerns raised by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) about potential health concerns in cows and pigs due to exposure to ergot alkaloids in feed. The feed industry is expected to collaborate actively in the monitoring process.

Impacted products

Cereals and cereal-derived products, grasses and grass-derived products including forage and compound feed.

What is changing?

This Recommendation is addressed to EU Member States with a view to collecting more information about the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed. The data collected will support future risk assessments and possible future regulations. The Recommendation does **not** introduce maximum levels for ergot alkaloids in feed.

Member States, with the active involvement of feed business operators, are recommended to monitor at least the following ergot alkaloids:

- ergocristine/ergocristinine
- ergotamine/ergotaminine
- ergocryptine/ergocryptinine (α - and β -isomers)
- ergometrine/ergometrinine
- ergosine/ergosinine

- ergocornine/ergocorninine.

The analysis of ergovaline/ergovalinine, agroclavine, dihydro-ergosine, and lolitrem B is also recommended.

Member States are recommended to take samples of:

- cereals and derived products
- grasses and derived products, including forage
- compound feed.

The recommended analytical method is liquid chromatography/tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS). Other methods may be used if they can reliably measure individual ergot alkaloids.

The target limit of quantification should be 5 µg/kg or lower.

Why?

The ergot alkaloids primarily targeted in this monitoring are associated with *Claviceps purpurea*, which causes a disease that occurs in cereals and grasses. Infected grains are toxic for humans and animals. Agroclavine and dihydro-ergosine are ergot alkaloids associated with *Claviceps africana* and *Claviceps fusiformis*, and may be relevant for imported feed. Ergovaline is usually found in grass species such as tall fescue or perennial ryegrass.

EFSA has identified animal health concerns linked to ergot alkaloids, especially for cows and pigs (EFSA [2012](#), [2017](#), [2024](#)) and the need for more data on occurrence, particularly for forage, sorghum, and ergovaline/ergovalinine in forage.

Timeline

EU Member States should regularly submit monitoring results to EFSA, with monitoring to be completed by **30 June 2028**.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Countries exporting feed materials to the EU should expect increased scrutiny of products that are at risk of ergot contamination. Suppliers may receive more frequent requests from EU buyers for information about the potential presence of ergot alkaloid. EU Member States are expected to actively involve the feed industry in the monitoring process.

Recommended Actions

Although the Recommendation does not introduce new maximum levels for ergot alkaloids in feed, it may lead to increased requests for data, testing expectations, and risk-management measures. Exporters should review their capacity to control ergot contamination, especially in feed intended for cattle and pigs.

Background

Ergot alkaloids are toxic compounds mainly associated with ergot fungi, particularly *Claviceps purpurea*, which can contaminate cereals, grasses, and other feed materials. EU legislation already sets maximum levels for certain undesirable substances in feed, including rye ergot, under Directive [2002/32/EC](#).

This new Recommendation replaces Commission Recommendation [2012/154/EU](#).

Resources

EFSA (2012) [Scientific Opinion on ergot alkaloids in food and feed](#). EFSA Journal, 10(7): 2798.

EFSA (2017) [Human and animal dietary exposure to ergot alkaloids](#). EFSA Journal, 15(7): 4902.

EFSA (2024) [Risks for animal health related to the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed](#). EFSA Journal, 22(1): e8496.

Directive [2002/32/EC](#) on undesirable substances in animal feed.

Sources

Commission Recommendation (EU) [2026/1243](#) on monitoring the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed

Visit the [AGRINFO website](#) to view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and [search](#) the database.

Disclaimer: *Under no circumstances shall COLEAD be liable for any loss, damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered that is claimed to have resulted from the use of information*

available on this website or any link to external sites. The use of the website is at the user's sole risk and responsibility. This information platform was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents do not, however, reflect the views of the European Union.