Nitrate and nitrite in feed

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Commission Recommendation (EU) 2026/2297 on the monitoring of nitrate and nitrite in feed and the prevention of nitrate and nitrite in certain feed materials

What is changing and why?

The European Commission recommends that European Union (EU) Member States should work with farmers and feed business operators to monitor nitrate and nitrite levels in animal feed.

Concerns have been raised that these substances, which may be present in forage, roughage, and products or by-products from sugar beet, sugarcane, starch, and alcoholic drink production, could cause health problems in animals. More data are needed to understand these risks better.

The Commission's Recommendation does not introduce new legal maximum levels for nitrate and nitrite in animal feed. Instead, it proposes good practices and guidance that includes the following.

- Nitrate in water: limit nitrate levels to 200 mg/l in water used for animals to drink or for feed production.
- Nitrate in feed: avoid giving pregnant animals feed containing more than 4,000 mg/kg of nitrates. For other animals, limit the amount of this feed. These levels are based on feed containing 12% moisture.
- Nitrite in feed: limit nitrite levels to 200 mg/kg, expressed as sodium nitrite (NaNO■). This level is based on feed containing 12% moisture.

Actions

Following developments in EU monitoring and risk assessments will help exporters to anticipate potential new EU rules.

Timeline

EU Member States and the feed industry should regularly submit monitoring data in line with EFSA's Data Collection Framework.

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