



2026/2297

20.10.2026

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2026/2297

of 16 October 2026

on the monitoring of nitrate and nitrite in feed and the prevention of nitrate and nitrite in certain feed materials

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The European Food Safety Authority ('Authority') Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) adopted in 2020 a risk assessment of nitrate and nitrite in feed ⁽¹⁾.
- (2) The Authority identified a possible health concern for ruminants related to the presence of nitrates in forages and roughage, and products thereof. The health risk from the exposure to nitrite in farmed and companion animals could not be assessed as no reference points and/or exposure estimates were available.
- (3) The Authority identified the need, among other, to have more information on the presence of nitrate and nitrite in forages and roughages and products derived thereof and of nitrite in products and by-products from sugar beet and sugarcane and from starch and alcoholic drink production.
- (4) Directive 2002/32/EC of the European Parliament and Council ⁽²⁾ establishes maximum levels for nitrite in feed materials, with the exception of silage, products and by-products from sugar beet and sugarcane and from starch and alcoholic drink production, and in complete feed.
- (5) The farmers should be encouraged to apply good practices to prevent high levels of nitrate and nitrite in forages and roughage and products thereof and feed business operators should be recommended to apply good practices to prevent high levels of nitrite in products and by-products from sugar beet and sugarcane and from starch and alcoholic drink production. This could be achieved by applying the principles as set out in the Annex to this Recommendation.
- (6) It is therefore appropriate to recommend the monitoring of nitrate and nitrite in certain feed materials and to provide principles for recommending the application of good practices to prevent high levels of nitrate and nitrite in certain feed materials.

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Member States with the active involvement of the farmers and other feed business operators are recommended to monitor the presence of nitrate and nitrite in forages and roughages and products derived thereof and of nitrite in products and by-products from sugar beet and sugarcane and from starch and alcoholic drink production.
- (2) Member States and feed business operators are recommended to provide to the Authority the data for compilation into one database in line with the requirements of Authority's Guidance on Standard Sample Description (SSD) for Food and Feed and the Authority's additional specific reporting requirements ⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ EFSA Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM), 2020. Scientific Opinion on the risk assessment of nitrate and nitrite in feed. *EFSA Journal* 2020;18(11):6290, 110 pp. <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2020.6290>.

⁽²⁾ Directive 2002/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 May 2002 on undesirable substances in animal feed (OJ L 140, 30.5.2002, p. 10, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2002/32/oj>).

⁽³⁾ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-continuous-collection-chemical-contaminants-occurrence-data-0>.

- (3) Member States are recommended to take into account the principles set out in the Annex when recommending measures to farmers and other feed business operators to reduce the presence of nitrate and nitrite in forages and roughages and products derived thereof and of nitrite in products and by-products from sugar beet and sugarcane and from starch and alcoholic drink production.

Done at Brussels, 16 October 2026.

For the Commission
Olivér VÁRHELYI
Member of the Commission

ANNEX

Principles for the prevention and reduction of nitrate and nitrite in feed and reduction of animal exposure to nitrate and nitrite

1. Good agricultural practices should be applied to ensure that the nitrate level in feed is as low as reasonable achievable levels by ensuring good growing conditions and particular attention to be paid to nitrogen fertilisation (no excessive and late application). Factors known to cause nitrate to accumulate in the plant include drought, cloudy or cold weather and application of certain plant protection products.
 2. The level of nitrate depends also on the stage of maturity (younger plants contain usually higher levels of nitrate and the level of nitrates decrease as plants mature) and part of the plant (most of the nitrate is located in the bottom part of the stalk). Therefore, harvesting close to maturity and raising the cutter head to selectively avoid stalk bases reduces the risk of nitrate toxicity.
 3. High nitrate containing forages and roughage are preferably harvested and fed as silage, as the fermentation process when feed is ensiled reduces the levels of nitrates when carried out under good conditions.
 4. It should be ensured that water used for drinking by animals or for the manufacturing of feed contains low levels of nitrate (e.g. lower than 200 mg/l).
 5. It is appropriate to screen the presence of nitrate in feed, known to contain high levels of nitrate and in particular in weather and/or production conditions known to result in higher nitrate levels than usual. In case the screening indicates the possibility of a high level of nitrates, a quantitative analysis is appropriate. In case of very high levels of nitrate (e.g. > more than 4 000 mg/kg, relative to a feed with a moisture content of 12 %), it should be avoided to feed this feed to pregnant animals and to limit the proportion of that feed in the ration for other animals.
 6. High levels of nitrite in products and by-products from sugar beet and sugarcane and from starch and alcoholic drink production should be prevented by avoiding or reducing bacterial infection. Feed materials containing more than 200 mg/kg nitrite as NaNO_2 (relative to a feed with a moisture content of 12 %) should not be used for feeding animals.
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