

Little melamine appears in eggs from chickens on highly contaminated feed

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Chickens that eat high levels of melamine in their feed still produce eggs that contain low levels of the potentially toxic contaminant.

Eggs from chickens that consumed extremely high levels of melamine in their feed still did not contain levels of the potentially toxic contaminant that exceeded U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) limits. That was the conclusion of the first study to check on the effects of melamine-contaminated feed in laying hens. It appears in *ACS' Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Liying Zhang and colleagues note that melamine, which is used to make certain plastics, triggered a public health controversy in 2008 because certain food manufacturers in China illegally added it to milk powder to distort the protein content. Authorities have since found excessive levels of melamine in eggs from [chickens](#) eating feed contaminated with the

substance. However, scientists did not know how much melamine might accumulate in eggs from this process, until now.

In an effort to establish a scientific basis for determining the risk, Zhang's group gave melamine-contaminated feed to egg-laying hens and found that increasing amounts of the chemical in feed resulted in increasing amounts in the eggs. However, none of the melamine concentrations in the eggs exceeded the FDA's maximum allowable level — 2.5 parts per million (ppm) in foods. The highest levels of melamine in the feed, about 100 ppm, resulted in egg contamination levels of about 1.45 ppm. The scientists suggest that melamine contamination levels in feed that fall below 100 ppm would not result in potential hazards for food safety.

More information: "Deposition of Melamine in Eggs from Laying Hens Exposed to Melamine Contaminated Feed", *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Provided by American Chemical Society

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