STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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November 30, 2012

Dear Animal Producers and Interested Parties:

Last summer's hot and dry weather in much of the United States means that animal producers (especially dairy producers) should be more vigilant in checking feeds for aflatoxins and other mycotoxins (toxins produced by fungi). The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is reminding animal producers that the drought, hail, insect damage, and disease in many states made corn and other crops more susceptible to the fungi that produce aflatoxins. Aflatoxins are probably the most common mycotoxins in corn and corn products, cottonseed and cottonseed products, peanut meal, and some other ingredients used in animal feeds.

Farmers should be aware that corn and other ingredients that are unfit for human consumption due to high levels of aflatoxins might be diverted to be used as animal feeds or feed ingredients, or blended with other ingredients in order to reduce the overall level of toxins. Under normal conditions, such blending of contaminated ingredients (e.g., corn with higher than acceptable levels of aflatoxins) is not permitted. However, because limited amounts of feed ingredients are available, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently granted waivers on the no blending policy, as they relate to the 2012 corn crop, to states that requested them. A firm operating in one of those states must have an agreement with the State before the firm will be allowed to mix or blend corn. Even then, the blending is only allowed under specific conditions, and a firm can only use the blended grain if it meets the action levels for specific animal feeding situations. One of the specific conditions established by the FDA is that blended corn is not to be used in dairy cattle feed.

The aflatoxin action level (i.e., the highest acceptable level) set by the FDA for feeds and feed ingredients for dairy animals is 20 parts per billion (ppb) because aflatoxins can be passed into milk and affect human consumers. Milk containing greater than 0.5 ppb aflatoxin M_1 and feed containing higher than 20 (ppb) aflatoxins (designated as B1, B2, G1 and G2 isomers, individually or in total) are considered to be adulterated under Washington State Food and Feed laws (RCW 69.04 and WAC 16-250-120(1)(a). By discussing aflatoxin prevention with their feed suppliers and monitoring their feed, dairy producers can decrease the chances of unacceptable levels of aflatoxin in their animals' milk.

More information about mycotoxins can be found on the following websites or by contacting Ali Kashani, Ph.D., at (360) 902-2028.

- http://www.fda.gov/default.htm (Search for mycotoxins)
- http://vetmed.iastate.edu/diagnostic-lab/diagnostic-services/diagnostic-sections/chemistry-/-toxicology/mycotoxins
- http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/Corn/corn001.htm
- http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC164220/
- http://otscweb.tamu.edu/Risk/Aflatoxin

WSDA plans to collect routine samples of corn, corn by-products, cotton seeds and total mix rations (composite feed) at various levels and points of distribution to analyze for aflatoxins and other mycotoxins. If you receive major bulk quantities of any of these ingredients and have a concern and know the exact time and date of delivery of the product, please e-mail foodsafety@agr.wa.gov or call WSDA at (360) 902-1876 to find out if a Food Safety Officer will be available to collect a sample of the feed and/or feed ingredient for analysis. It is best to obtain samples during the movement of feed from truck or railcar to bin, when possible.

Sincerely,

Kirk Robinson
Assistant Director
Food Safety and Consumer Services Division
Washington State Department of Agriculture