

Govt, farmers failed in Dutch egg scandal: report

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Millions of eggs had to be pulled from supermarket shelves during a tainted egg scandal that spread to 45 countries

Poultry farmers, the Dutch food safety board and the government all failed in their duties during a tainted egg scandal which spread to 45 countries causing millions in damage, a scathing report found Monday.

Millions of [eggs](#) had to be pulled from supermarket shelves and destroyed across Europe and hundreds of [poultry farms](#) were closed after an insecticide called fipronil was revealed to have been found in Dutch eggs late last July.

But the independent report said there were already indications of fipronil contamination as early as November 2016 which should have been acted on by the food safety authority NVWA.

"Companies in the egg chain, the NVWA and the agriculture and public health ministries all failed to place sufficient priority on food safety," said the long-awaited report.

Despite the early indications, the fipronil contamination was not declared an incident by the NVWA until July 18, and it only moved to shutter some 258 farms the following week.

By then millions of tainted eggs were already in stores having been transported across borders. The scandal even reached Hong Kong.

Commonly used to get rid of fleas, lice and ticks from animals, fipronil is banned by the European Union from use in the food industry.

The scandal stemmed from a substance used by a Dutch company, Chickfriend, which farmers in the Netherlands and Belgium say they hired to treat their chickens. Two of the company's directors were arrested, but no court case has yet been opened.

The discovery of the contamination sparked a row with Germany about

how long officials knew about the problem and led to a special debate in the European Union.

Belgium was the first country to officially notify the EU's food safety alert system on July 20, but the news did not go public until August 1.

Brussels accused the Netherlands of keeping the contamination quiet. The Hague said it was tipped off about the use of fipronil in poultry pens, but did not know it was in eggs.

"The commission concludes that the NVWA inadequately realised its duty as inspector in the field of [food safety](#)," the report concluded.

And the two government ministries at the sharp end of the crisis "underestimated the impact of the incident and acknowledged too late the numerous policy-related questions."

The scandal rumbles on. Last week 60 Dutch organic poultry farms were found to be using 15 unauthorised pesticides and disinfectants, according to [food safety](#) campaigners Foodwatch.

And on June 11, German authorities pulled some 73,000 Dutch eggs from shelves due to fipronil contamination.

The EU insists there is no threat to humans, but the World Health Organization says that when eaten in large quantities it can harm the kidneys, liver and thyroid glands.

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