

FACT SHEET 1



EGGSACTING TESTS FIND POULTRY IS THE SAFEST

By Brendan O'Malley, Courier Mail, Monday 11 March 2002

Banned chemicals, antibiotics, toxic metals and insecticides have been found in more than 100 samples of Australian-grown foodstuffs. But more than 99 per cent of locally grown foods passed health guidelines, the National Residue Survey found. The NRS found 105 cases where fresh food failed to meet Australian standards, with about half of the contaminants coming from agricultural or veterinary chemicals. The other contaminants came from toxic metals.

Eggs and poultry were the cleanest food types. No growth hormones were found in eggs or poultry and hormones detected in other types of meat were believed to have come from pregnant animals or other natural sources. The worst fresh food offenders were non-chicken meat products. Fifty-five samples out of almost 16,000 samples tested did not measure up to health standards. Most problems were due to tainted cattle, sheep and pig carcasses, but game animals also contained unacceptable levels of heavy metals and chemicals. Pigs were the most common source of contaminants, with 28 samples breaching regulations. Traces of antibiotics were found in 25 pig carcasses, four of which were above allowable limits.

Sheep accounted for many of the heavy metal breaches, particularly cadmium and lead, and one case of contamination with the banned chemical dieldrin. One batch of problem carcasses was traced to animals eating lead-based paint tins at a garbage dump. Seafood was a big offender, with 25 cases of tainted samples out of the 642 samples tested. Mercury contamination in sharks created the major breach of standards.