Bulletin Alert: Monensin contamination in poultry layer pellet feed

The University of Kentucky Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (UKVDL) has recently received poultry from several flocks that developed illness and death after ingesting a new batch of poultry layer pellet feed. Clinical signs, post-mortem lesions and feed analysis are consistent with ionophore intoxication in these flocks. The layer pellets contained extremely high concentrations of monensin.

The feed was produced at a central Kentucky feed mill and distributed to other points. The University of Kentucky Regulatory Services and the state veterinarian’s office are working with the feed mill to ensure proper recall and stop-sale practices.

Clinical signs of monensin intoxication in chickens include anorexia and feed refusal, decreased egg production, diarrhea, depression, extreme weakness, sternal recumbency with legs extended posteriorly, drooped heads and wings, proprioceptive deficits, paralysis and death. If ionophore intoxication is suspected, the feed should immediately be removed. Birds can be submitted to the UKVDL, either freshly dead or moribund but still alive, for post-mortem examination. Three birds can be submitted using the same accession, for a cost of $30 including the accession fee. A sample of the suspect feed should also be submitted along with the tag information. A gallon-size bag of feed is preferred.

FARAD can be contacted for more information on residue and other concerns (www.farad.org). Dr. Al Harrison, UK Regulatory Services feed division coordinator, should be contacted for any concerns with manufactured animal feed quality issues at 859-257-5887.

Contact Dr. Cynthia Gaskill, veterinary toxicologist at the UKVDL at 859-257-7912 if you have any questions or would like additional information.