

## Is Horsemeat Safe to Eat

The mislabelled beef issue was not a public health or food safety crisis — horsemeat is completely safe to eat—. This underpinned the main conclusions in the joint assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in 2013, which followed a coordinated EU-wide testing and monitoring plan, launched to check for horsemeat DNA in beef products and the absence of the therapeutic drug, phenylbutazone in the wake of the mislabelled beef issue.



### Horsemeat production and official veterinary inspections

Horsemeat can be a legitimate ingredient for the production of minced meat and meat preparations, provided that, as for any other ingredient, it is declared on the label. Food business operators can only place horsemeat on the market if horses are slaughtered in approved slaughterhouses and the meat is subject to official veterinary inspection that ensures that it is fit for human consumption.

### EU horsemeat consumption

Horsemeat consumption has increased across Europe in several years, with Italy being the highest producer, followed by Poland, Romania and Spain. Although horsemeat products are readily available in Europe, there is a wide disparity in consumption patterns, as in some countries this does not necessarily translate into a broad social acceptance of eating horsemeat. However, the general increase may be due to a change in attitudes and the interest of consumers to the taste to this kind of meat

### What is phenylbutazone

Phenylbutazone – sometimes also referred to as “bute” – is a substance that falls into the class of drugs known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Bute is used for the treatment of pain and fever in horses. Some countries permit its use in horses for the management of chronic bone and joint problems e.g. arthritis, tendinitis in sport horses and horses kept as companion animals not destined for the food chain



### Why was phenylbutazone banned for use in food-producing animals?

The recent risk assessment carried out by the EFSA and the EMA confirms EMA’s 1997 conclusions: it is not possible to establish levels of residues of phenylbutazone that could be considered as safe in food of animal based on currently available data. As no maximum residue limits (MRLs) could be established, those animals treated with bute are not allowed to enter the food chain.

### Food safety monitoring on horsemeat and results of the EU 2013 enhanced testing plan

The safety of horsemeat is being closely monitored through the respective residue testing programmes of the Members States, third countries as well as testing carried out at the border inspection points, with satisfactory results. The EU 2013 enhanced testing programme showed that about 0.5% of equine carcasses tested positive for bute.

### Residues of Phenylbutazone are of low concern to consumers

The joint assessment from the EFSA and the EMA concluded that any potential illegal presence of residues of phenylbutazone in horsemeat is of low concern for consumers due to the low likelihood of exposure and the overall low likelihood of toxic effects. In fact, it was found that the probability of a consumer experiencing a negative health effect due to residues of phenylbutazone was estimated to range approximately from 2 in a trillion to 1 in 100 million.

### Nutritional Value of Horsemeat

Did you know that Horsemeat has a healthy nutrient profile, essential for health?

- **Low in fat and cholesterol**
- **High levels of haem iron**
- Rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids e.g. **omega-3**, which have been reported to have positive effects on health including the potential to reduce cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer disease, atherosclerosis and type II diabetes
- High content of unsaturated fatty acids relative to saturated fat
- Rich in **Vitamin B12** which has several important functions, including red blood cell formation, releasing energy from the food we eat and preventing Vitamin B12 deficiency anaemia.