

Legal Restriction on Veterinary Drug Residues and Surveillance for Residues in Food

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In recent years, there has been a steadily growing demand in Japan for variety of livestock products as the eating habits of the Japanese become more Westernized. This has brought about great changes in the methods of raising livestock in Japan and elsewhere, notably with larger numbers of animals being raised together within limited space. In spite of the increased demand for meat and fowl, the Japanese, who populate an island archipelago, still prize seafood as a main sources and the internationally implemented limitations on fishing, necessary for conservation, have created a need for farm-raised seafood to supplement catches. This relatively new industry is becoming more prosperous year by year.

Various veterinary drugs, such as antibiotics and synthetic antibacterials, are widely used in the rearing of food-producing animals to prevent and treat infectious diseases and to promote their growth. Although these drugs have been a boon to the aquiculture industry, their use has not been without problems much in the same way the use of certain pesticides in agriculture has been paradoxically both beneficial and detrimental to human and animal welfare. So, to secure the safety of food, on May 29, 2006 the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) introduced the positive list system for agricultural chemicals remaining in foods-the system to prohibit the distribution of foods that contain agricultural chemicals above a certain level if maximum residue limits (MRLs) have not been established. Therefore, I would like to introduce mainly the regulatory of drugs in food-producing animals and surveillance for residues in livestock products.