



FACT SHEET WITHHOLDING PERIODS

What is a Withholding Period (WHP)?

The withholding period (WHP) is defined in the Ag and Vet Labeling Codes as the period that must elapse between the last application of a chemical and:

- harvesting of plants;
- grazing or cutting for stock food; and
- consumption by a human or animal after post-harvest use.

The objective of a WHP is to provide users with the information they require to ensure that residues in their treated produce will not exceed the maximum residue limit (MRL) set by food safety regulators.

What is an export slaughter interval (ESI)?

For some veterinary products, export markets require a longer period between last treatment and slaughter, called an Export Slaughter Interval (ESI). This occurs where importing countries have set a lower allowable limit than is used in Australia – therefore more time is needed for any residue to fall to the lower allowable limit. ESIs must be considered for all pigs slaughtered in export abattoirs, regardless of whether the carcasses will go to a domestic buyer or to export. ESI advice is particularly important for quality assurance schemes, and especially for producers filling out the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) forms as part of the whole-of-chain management of exported product.

For more information on WHPs, ESIs and quality assurance systems, go to www.apiq.com.au. For more information on ESIs go to www.pigpass.com.au or ask your veterinarian.

The National Residue Survey (NRS)

Residue monitoring in Australia is an important part of an overall strategy to minimise unwanted chemical residues in food. The NRS is a random sampling program, which monitors chemical residue levels in Australian commodities and indicates corrective action where required. Residues tested for in pork include agricultural chemicals (e.g. pesticides and antibiotics), environmental contaminants (e.g. heavy metals) and other chemicals that have trade concern (e.g. Dioxin).

The Pork Residue testing program fulfils the requirements of both AQIS and those of international trading partners from export certification, and therefore market access. Random residue testing programs provide verification of agricultural and veterinary residue levels in Australian commodities, identify potential residue problems and indicate where corrective action is required.

Australian Pork Limited (APL) is responsible for designing the program in terms of the number of residues to be tested. However, costings are calculated by government, and APL has little control over program costs. The NRS is funded through a compulsory levy on producers of 17.5c per pig charged at slaughter.

How do I avoid Residues?

To minimise the risks of selling pigs with chemical residues:

- Always adhere to label recommendations (species treated, dose rate, frequency of treatment, withholding period) for any chemicals used on your pigs.
- Only source prescription-only medicines (Schedule 4; S4s) from a veterinarian. This veterinarian should have inspected the pigs on your farm and has diagnosed the condition(s) that you are treating.
- Record any animal treatments, including date of treatment(s), product(s) used, dose administered, reason for treatment and earliest date for sale.
- Ideally, register to become accredited with the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ[✓]®).
- Only use chemicals “off label” under the direct written advice of a veterinarian.

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