
Executive summary

In the present report, the Health Council of the Netherlands reviewed ammonia. Eighty percent of all manufactured ammonia is used as fertilizer. A third of this is applied directly to soil as pure ammonia. The rest is used to make other fertilizers that contain ammonium compounds, usually ammonium salts. Ammonia is also used to manufacture synthetic fibres, plastics, and explosives. Furthermore, it is present in refrigeration systems. Many household cleaners and window-cleaning products also contain ammonia in the form of ammonium ions and it is further used in smelling salts.

This report is part of a series in which the Health Council evaluates the effects of substances on reproduction, at the request of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment. It mainly concerns substances to which man can be occupationally exposed. The Subcommittee on the Classification of Reproduction Toxic Substances of the Dutch Expert Committee on Occupational Safety of the Health Council, hereafter called the committee, evaluates the effects on male and female fertility and on the development of the progeny. Moreover, the committee considers the effects of a substance on lactation and on the progeny via lactation.

The committee recommends classification according to the Directive 93/21/EEC of the European Union. For ammonia, they are:

- for effects on fertility, the committee recommends not classifying ammonia due to a lack of appropriate data
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- for effects on development, the committee recommends not classifying ammonia due to a lack of appropriate data
- the committee is of the opinion that a lack of appropriate data precludes the labelling of ammonia for effects during lactation.