

To: the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
To: the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport
To: the State Secretary for Infrastructure and Water Management

Date: February 14th, 2018 Your ref: DGAN-DAD/17008625 E-mail: ej.schoten@gr.nl
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Subject: Presenting the advisory report on *health risks associated with livestock farms: follow-up advice*

Dear Ministers and State Secretary,

On 27 January 2017, the then State Secretary of Economic Affairs – also acting on behalf of the then Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the then State Secretary for Infrastructure and the Environment – asked the Health Council of the Netherlands for advice about the health risks of living in the vicinity of livestock farms. The underlying reason was the results of a large-scale Dutch study known under the abbreviation VGO (Livestock Farming and Risks for Local Residents). A group of experts was consulted to answer this request for advice. Based on their input, I have drawn up the advisory report ‘Health risks associated with livestock farms: follow-up advice’. For questions relating to air quality, efforts have been made to stay in line with the report that the Health Council of the Netherlands issued on 23 January last, ‘Health benefits through cleaner air’. I am hereby presenting you and the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the State Secretary for Infrastructure and Water Management the requested advice, having consulted the Standing Committee on Public Health.

In my judgement, there are indications that living in proximity to livestock farms is associated with specific health risks. The evidential strength for a causal link is however insufficient. It is the case that elevated concentrations of particulate matter do occur around livestock farms. Tackling hot spots such as these is recommended in the advisory report ‘Health benefits through cleaner air’. Reducing emissions of ammonia (which contributes to the formation of particulate matter) from livestock farms is also important for improving public health as a whole.

I support the Committee’s conclusions and recommendations.

Best regards,
(signed)

prof. dr. W.A. van Gool,
President