

CODE OF PRACTICE

ON THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANIMAL MEDICINES ON THE FARM



ASSURING THE SAFETY, QUALITY AND EFFICACY
OF VETERINARY MEDICINES

THIS CODE IS SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS:



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Scope

This Code of Practice has been developed by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), with the support of the organisations shown on the front cover. The aim of this code is to provide a helpful reference document for keepers of livestock in respect of the safe use of veterinary medicines.

Introduction

Animal medicines play an important role in the control and prevention of disease and animal suffering but have the potential to cause harm if not used properly. In the UK, consumers have long enjoyed the benefits of rigorous systems designed to protect them from harmful residues of such medicines in their food. These include statutory controls on the authorisation, distribution and use of such medicines.

Authorisation of animal medicines

The VMD is responsible for the authorisation and control of the manufacture and marketing of animal medicines and for surveillance for residues of animal medicines in meat and other animal products.

Diagnosis and prevention of disease

Veterinary surgeons ensure that animal diseases are properly diagnosed and can help to design preventive programmes such as Flock/Herd or Animal Health Plans. You should therefore consult your veterinary surgeon when a diagnosis of disease and treatment for your animals may be needed or when you need to design or modify a preventive disease programme.

Distribution Categories of animal medicines

Once a disease has been diagnosed and treatment prescribed or a preventive programme designed, it may be necessary to obtain an animal medicine. All animal medicines in the UK are assigned into one of four distribution categories:

- **Prescription Only Medicines - Veterinarian (POM-V)**

A veterinary medicinal product classified as a POM-V may only be supplied once it has been prescribed by a veterinary surgeon following a clinical assessment of the animal (or group of animals) which must be under the care of the prescribing veterinarian. This category includes veterinary medicines that were previously classified as MFS. POM-V products may only be supplied by veterinary surgeons and pharmacists.

- **Prescription Only Medicines – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, Suitably Qualified Person (SPQ) (POM-VPS)**

A veterinary medicinal product classified as POM-VPS may only be prescribed by either a registered veterinary surgeon, pharmacist or Suitably Qualified Person (SQP). An SQP is a person who is trained and registered to be able to sell a limited range of veterinary products and often works from a pet shop, saddlery or agricultural merchant's premises. A clinical assessment of the animal(s) is not a prerequisite when prescribing this category of veterinary medicines and the animal does not have to be under the care of a veterinarian. The person prescribing, however, must be satisfied that the person administering the medicine has the competence to do so safely and that the medicine is intended for its authorised use. The prescriber must provide advice on how to use the product, making specific reference to any warnings or contra-indications relevant to the medicine.

- **Non-Food Animal – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, SQP (NFA-VPS)**
A veterinary medicinal product classified as NFA-VPS may only be supplied by either a registered veterinary surgeon, pharmacist or SQP. As with POM-VPS medicines, a clinical assessment of the animal(s) is not a prerequisite for supply of this category. The supplier, however, must be satisfied that the person administering the medicine has the competence to do so safely and the medicine is intended for its authorised use. The supplier must also provide advice related to any warnings or contra-indications relevant to it and also advise on how the product has to be administered.
- **Authorised Veterinary Medicine – General Sales List (AVM-GSL)**
A veterinary medicinal product classified as an AVM-GSL may be supplied by any retailer as there are no restrictions on its supply.

Safe use of animal medicines on farm

Ultimately it is the farmer who is responsible for ensuring that animal medicines are used in a safe, responsible and effective way in accordance with a prescription. The following Code of Practice has been drawn up to provide you with guidelines to help you to fulfil this responsibility. *This Code is intended as a general guide and should not be treated as a complete or authoritative statement of the law on any particular case.*

Plan ahead to prevent disease

1. *Prevention is the best policy.* Draw up a clear Animal Health Plan. It would be useful to work with your veterinary surgeon to identify the best ways to prevent or treat disease in your animals and to ensure their welfare is fully taken into account, including any necessary changes in farm practice. Ensure that your plan includes all the medicines you are using including those incorporated in medicated feedingstuffs.
2. *Consult your veterinary surgeon* when you require the diagnosis of any animal health problem and advice on the most appropriate animal medicines available to treat or prevent disease. A pharmacist or SQP can provide information on the medicines that they can lawfully supply. However, they are not qualified to carry out a clinical assessment of the animals.

Buy from authorised sources

3. *Buy animal medicines which are not classified as AVM-GSL only from your veterinary surgeon, pharmacist, or SQP in the UK.* Sales from other sources are illegal and the medicines may not be safe or effective and could harm your animals or the consumer.¹

¹ Anyone wishing to buy feed supplements to mix on their own premises must be registered with the Animal Medicines Inspectorate (tel: 02476 849260) or the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland (tel: 02890 520100). Anyone wishing to buy sheep dip will need to satisfy their Registered Qualified Person that they or their employee holds a relevant Certificate of Competence in the safe use of sheep dips from the National Proficiency Tests Council (tel: 02476 857300)

4. *Only buy and use authorised animal medicines.* It is an offence to use and be in possession of unauthorised products unless they have been legally prescribed by your veterinary surgeon. Authorised medicated animal feed will also be clearly marked.
5. *Only buy enough of the appropriate medicine necessary for current/immediate use.* There should be no stockpiling of medicines on the farm. Remember that it is illegal to sell or pass on medicines to anyone else unless you are authorised to do so.

Keep proper records

6. *Keep a full record of all medicines you buy and those you use on your animals.*² It is a legal requirement to keep a record of all medicines administered to food-producing animals, regardless of their distribution category including those administered by your veterinary surgeon or in-feed. Further information on record keeping requirements is available in Veterinary Medicines Guidance Note 16 Record Keeping Requirements for Veterinary Medicinal Products which is available on our website (www.vmd.gov.uk). At the time of acquisition your record must show:

- name of the product;
- the batch number;
- date of acquisition;
- quantity acquired;
- name and address of the supplier.

7. At the time of administration you must also record:

- name of the product;
- the date of administration;
- quantity administered;
- withdrawal period;
- identification of the animals treated.

8. Because of the legal requirements which fall on the food industry about avoiding residues of animal medicines in human food, it is important that that you keep detailed information on the medicines used on your animals. It may therefore be in your commercial interest to record also the:

- dates on which any withdrawal period for meat, milk or any other animal product ended;
- date on which the treatment finished;
- name of the person who administered the animal medicine; and
- expiry dates of any products used.

² The National Office of Animal Health (NOAH) and the Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA) publish an Animal Medicine Record Book which includes a form in which these records can be kept. This is available from www.noah.co.uk
The Pig Veterinary Society also produce a Veterinary Medicines – Record of Administration booklet available from www.thepigsite.com/pigjournal

9. *Keep all records for at least five years.* This is the minimum period required by law. You should also make these records available for official inspection by:
- officers from Defra;
 - officers from the local authority;
 - in Northern Ireland an officer authorised by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Your veterinary surgeon may also wish to see these records.

Administer medicines properly

10. Make sure everyone on your premises who handles or administers medicines to animals is responsible for ensuring that any withdrawal period is observed.
11. *Medicines should be handled and administered only by someone competent to do so or under their supervision.*³ Your veterinary surgeon will be able to help with training in the right way to administer animal medicines, including injections. Some medicines may be administered only under the direct supervision of a veterinary surgeon or according to a veterinary surgeon's prescription. Particular care should be taken when handling medicated animal feedingstuffs.⁴
12. *Avoid the unnecessary use of medicines.* Only when you are absolutely sure they are necessary should you go ahead with treatment. Sheep dip products must be handled by, or under the supervision of, someone who holds a Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of Sheep Dips. The person must have passed Parts 1 and 2, or units 1 or 2, in order to hold such a Certificate. However, where a person has had practical experience of sheep dipping prior to 1 October 2006, the above requirement does not apply until 31 December 2008.
13. The National Proficiency Test Council, or the NPTC Part of the City & Guilds Group, issues such Certificates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.⁵ In Scotland, the Scottish Skills Testing Service, which is part of the NPTC, issues the Certificates⁶.
14. The holder of the Certificate is responsible for the purchase and safe use of sheep dips. When purchasing sheep dip, they must satisfy the supplier that they hold the relevant Certificate of Competence. Where the holder of the Certificate requires someone else to purchase the sheep dip on their behalf, they must ensure that the supplier is made aware of this. The supplier must provide the double-sided laminated safety notice specified in the Regulations and the holder of the certificate must ensure that all co-workers are fully aware of the instructions contained in the notice. When the products are being used, the holder of the certificate need not actually handle the products but must be present and supervise those that do.

³ Competence testing in the Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines is available from the National Proficiency Tests Council, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2LG (tel: 02476 857300)

⁴ A separate Veterinary Medicines Guidance Note 21 on the Handling of Medicated Feedingstuffs is available on the VMD website (www.vmd.gov.uk)

⁵ See 3 above

⁶ Scottish Skills Testing Service, Ingliston, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH28 8NE (tel: 01313 332040)

15. Sheep dip is highly toxic and even the smallest quantity must not be allowed to pollute water courses. There are a number of initiatives aimed at emphasising the need to use the products in the correct way so as to minimise the risk of pollution. As part of the Pollution Reduction Programme for sheep dip, the NFU and others have promoted a campaign called “STOP EVERY DROP”. Part of this campaign involved the production of a poster, which is reproduced below:

Stop every drop



This will help you retain the widest range of parasite treatment products while reducing pollution, preventing prosecution and protecting your SPS payments.

What should I do before dipping?

Allow time for problems to be fixed or to make alternative arrangements eg getting a qualified contractor.

Fill the dip bath with water, mark the level, and leave overnight to check for losses. Check the area around the dip bath for leaks.



Check pollution routes to water courses:

- Fill the dip **with water** until it overflows, then follow the flow
- If flow/pollution can get to a watercourse then losses must be blocked, diverted or caught
- All drainage from drip pens must go back into the dip bath
- All drainage from mobile dips must be blocked, diverted or caught, or site the mobile dip in a field with no water courses or land drains
- It may be necessary to use alternative treatments or facilities

How can I legally dispose of any dip?

- Get a groundwater authorisation from your relevant Environment Agency office
- If a contractor treats your sheep and takes used dip to his site, he must have a suitable groundwater authorisation
- If used dip is transferred to a third party, then a transfer note must be completed, obtained from the Environment Agency Waste Helpline 0845 603 3113

Do not dip if rain is forecast within 24 hours, unless you have suitable well ventilated housing to keep the flock in until the dipped sheep are dry.

Stop every drop



What should I do during dipping?

- Make sure that the person who holds the certificate of competence is always present
- Only use authorised products and follow manufacturers' instructions
- Make sure all drips and splashes run back into the dip bath
- Make sure you have absorbent material, eg cat litter, to soak up spills
- Allow each sheep to stand in the dripping area to catch any runoff for at least 10minutes
- Do not return sheep to normal grazing. Put them in a **holding field** next to the pens with a water trough. This field should have no natural watercourses, if it does fence them off from livestock access.

Remember: Movement of wet sheep after dipping can lead to pollution

What should I do after dipping?

- Rinse empty dip containers three times with clean water and empty contents in dip bath
- Empty the dip bath directly after use, eg into a vacuum tanker or bowser designated for dip storage. This means dip can be safely transported and disposed of.
- If you wash down the dipping area make sure you collect the washings in the dip bath and dispose of them via the authorised area this could be the **holding field**, contractor removal or the waste transfer method

Your sheep should now remain in the holding field until dry

16. *Read instructions carefully*, including operator safety instructions, and make sure that you understand them before administering any medicine. Check all the information that is available, including the label and package leaflet or ask your supplier. It is important that the correct dosage is used and that it is administered properly. This is particularly important where a medicine is administered by injection.
17. *Check the expiry date* on the label. Do not use any medicine which is past its expiry date. Medicines have a short shelf-life following incorporation into feed. In addition, some medicines have a short shelf-life once the container is opened. Make a note of the date after which the medicated feed or medicine in the opened container is not to be used. Dispose of any out-of-date animal medicine in accordance with the advice given in paragraphs 27 to 30 of this Code.
18. *Only use medicines in the way for which they were authorised*, including the approved species, age and dosage, unless otherwise directed by your veterinary surgeon. Never use Prescription Only Medicines on animals other than the ones for which they were originally prescribed – unless directed by your veterinary surgeon. It is illegal and dangerous to do so.
19. *Always complete the treatment programme*. Once a medicine is first used, the full course of treatment must always be completed to minimise the possible development of resistance.
20. *If in any doubt about any aspect of administering any animal medicine, consult your veterinary surgeon*.

Take proper precautions

21. *Always observe all of the operator safety instructions on the label.*⁷ It is essential that the advice on the product label and package leaflet is read and followed each time the medicine is used.
22. *Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers at hand*. These should include your local doctor, hospital, veterinary surgeon and pharmacist.

Observe withdrawal periods

23. *Strictly observe any withdrawal period* stated on the label for the medicine, or indicated by your veterinary surgeon. This is the period between the end of treatment and the slaughter of the animal or the taking of eggs, milk or honey for human consumption. It is an offence to slaughter for human consumption, or to sell for slaughter for human consumption, any animal that has not completed its withdrawal period. Remember that if an animal medicine has been used under veterinary guidance in a manner other than that recommended on the label, the appropriate withdrawal period may be affected. Your veterinary surgeon will provide you with information on the withdrawal period in those circumstances.

⁷ For further information on using animal medicines safely, with particular reference to the COSHH Regulations, refer to the HSE Guidance Note - Veterinary Medicines: Safe Use by Farmers and Other Animal Handlers available free of charge from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA (tel: 01787 881165).

Store medicines safely

24. *Store medicines in accordance with the instructions on the label.* Storage temperature can be critical to maintain the safety and efficacy of a medicine. Light can also damage some medicines. Never leave animal medicines in direct sunlight or allow them to get too hot or to freeze. If they are being stored in a fridge you should ensure that the fridge temperature is checked regularly and is between 2°C and 8°C. Where medicated feed is stored on farm, the feed bins should be clearly labelled with a description of the contents and their expiry date.
25. *Make sure that your medicines are stored securely, where possible under lock and key.* Keep medicines in their original containers, clean and out of the reach of children, animals or anyone not supposed to handle them. Store them separately from non medicines.

Report any harmful, unexpected side-effects

26. *Report any harmful and unintended reactions to animal medicines* that you observe in your animals to your veterinary surgeon or directly to the Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme at the VMD (tel: 01932 336911). You should also report any reactions in people exposed to animal medicines, either through handling them or handling recently treated animals. Further information on the Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme and a reporting form ("Yellow Form") is available from our website (www.vmd.gov.uk).

Dispose of unused medicines safely

27. *Never sell or pass on unused medicines to anyone else.* Remember that it is illegal to do so unless you are authorised to supply them.
28. *Do not hoard partly used medicines.* Safely dispose of unused or out-of-date medicines and containers and application equipment (including needles to a sharps container) when you finish the treatment for which they were intended.⁸ Always follow any advice on the label about disposal. Do not dispose of such items with domestic rubbish or pour animal medicines down the drain or toilet unless advised to do so. Your veterinary surgeon may be able to supply you with containers for their safe disposal.
29. When disposing of animal medicines, other than by treating an animal, the following must be recorded:
 - the date of disposal;
 - the quantity of the product involved;
 - how and where the product was disposed of.

⁸ Separate guidance on the safe disposal of animal medicines is available in the HSE Guidance Note - (AS31) Veterinary Medicines: Safe Use by Farmers and Other Animal Handlers available free of charge from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA (tel: 01787 881165).

30. Used sheep dips and similar animal medicines present a particular hazard to the environment. Special care must be taken with their use and disposal can only be done with disposal consent from the Environment Agency or by a contracted sheep dip operator. No diluted sheep dip, no matter how small the amount, should be allowed to enter watercourses. You may risk prosecution if sheep dip is allowed to pollute any watercourse.⁹

Conclusion

31. This Code of Practice aims to provide a framework for animal owners and keepers. It is important that medicines are used responsibly and that advice provided in this leaflet is followed.
32. This note is only a general guide and must not be treated as a complete or authoritative statement of the law on any particular case.

⁹ Copies of the booklet, Pollution Prevention Guidelines: Sheep dipping (PPG12), are available from the Environment Agency (tel: 01454 624400) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (tel: 01786 457700). Under the Groundwater Regulations 1998 a prior authorisation must be obtained before disposing of sheep dips and similar medicines.



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