



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2014/15 – TOP PRIORITIES (EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS)

The aim, the approaches we take and the methods we use in communicating with our stakeholders are set out in the [VMD's Communications and Engagement Strategy](#).

This document sets out the areas we are focusing on in 2014/15 for our external communications. These 'top priorities' are in addition to the ongoing communications work we do with all our stakeholders to keep them up to date with the work of the VMD and veterinary medicines issues that affect them.

We will concentrate our efforts and resources and work with others (our 'partners') to make sure our key messages on our 'top priorities' are received and understood and that they are effective in changing practices and behaviour in the groups they are aimed at (the 'target' audience). At the same time we will ensure that our day to day communications with all our stakeholders, on existing, new and emerging issues relating to veterinary medicines are effective. In identifying partners who can help us deliver our communications priorities, this list is not exhaustive; we are keen to work with others who feel they can help us communicate our messages.

We have 4 top priorities:

- Combating sale/purchase of unauthorised medicines and sale without the appropriate control of authorised medicines on the internet.
- Promoting the importance of reporting suspected adverse events (i.e. side-effects) from using medicines (Pharmacovigilance).
- Promoting the responsible use of antibiotics.
- Improving guidance to horse owners about medicines.

1. **COMBATING SALE/PURCHASE OF UNAUTHORISED MEDICINES ON THE INTERNET**

TARGET AUDIENCE – PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY, VETS, FARMERS, ANIMAL OWNERS

- **Accredited Internet Retailer Scheme** –promotion to general public, retailers and professionals (e.g. vets and vet nurses) to ensure take-up and promote scheme's value.
- **Promoting awareness of the law** - communication of legal requirements affecting the buying and selling of medicines.
- **Enforcement** –communication of VMD's activities and successes.

VMD Partners

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), other UK and EU enforcement bodies (e.g. the police, UK Border Agency etc), British Veterinary Association (BVA), Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), British Veterinary Nurses Association (BVNA), National Office of Animal Health (NOAH), Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA), Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA), General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland (DHSSPS(NI)), Medicines Health Regulatory Authority (MHRA), National Farmers Union (NFU), Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA), media, shows/events' organisers, pet owning organisations and animal health charities.

Success criteria

- Increased sign-up to Accredited Internet Retailer Scheme (AIRS).
- Higher level of public awareness of AIRS evidenced through questionnaires completed by visitors to VMD's stand at shows/events.
- Positive news stories about the VMD's achievements in removing unauthorised medicines from sale.

2. **PROMOTING THE IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING SUSPECTED ADVERSE EVENTS (I.E. SIDE-EFFECTS AND TREATMENT FAILURES) FOLLOWING USE OF MEDICINES (PHARMACOVIGILANCE)**

TARGET AUDIENCE – PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY, VETS, FARMERS, ANIMAL OWNERS

Raise the profile of messages on the importance of vets and the public reporting suspected adverse events associated with using veterinary medicines by:

- Continuing to highlight significant issues relating to any adverse events from using veterinary medicines (pharmacovigilance) in the veterinary

press as required, including giving consideration to publicising instances where reports and subsequent action have averted problems with medicines.

- Putting more regularly updated data in the public domain on most frequently reported signs for active substances based on reports submitted by vets.
- Continuing to ensure that electronic reporting template is as straightforward and easy to use for people reporting incidents based on their feedback.

VMD Partners

BVA, RCVS, BVNA, NFU, GPhC, PSNI, DHSSPS (NI), RUMA, shows/events, media, pet owning organisations and animal charities.

Success criteria

- Higher proportion of spontaneous reports submitted electronically

3. PROMOTING THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS

TARGET AUDIENCE – VETS, FARMERS, ANIMAL OWNERS

- Communicate effectively to vets, farmers and animal owners the importance of responsible use and what this means in practice.
- Promote greater awareness of the efforts and successful results of the VMD's work across Government and Europe to improve the assessment and management of current and emerging risks.

VMD Partners

Department of Health (DH), BVA, RCVS, NFU, RUMA and other key industry bodies, trade associations and third sector bodies.

Success criteria

- Effective VMD contributions to help generate sensible, balanced and proportionate media coverage.
- Greater understanding of antimicrobial resistance issues, in particular about responsible use, and the work of the VMD in tackling AMR.

4. IMPROVING GUIDANCE TO HORSE OWNERS ABOUT MEDICINES

TARGET AUDIENCE – HORSE OWNERS

- Produce revised guidance to horse owners/keepers that sets out clearly for both the issues to be considered when prescribing and using medicines for horses.

VMD Partners

Defra, Horse Passport Agency, British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), RCVS, BVA, media and animal charities.

Success criteria

- Comprehensive and accurate advice that horse owners/keepers find useful.