



ASSURING THE SAFETY, QUALITY AND EFFICACY
OF VETERINARY MEDICINES

Summary of the Information Gathering Exercise on Misuse of Veterinary Prescriptions

1. On 30 March 2012 the VMD launched an information gathering exercise on the misuse of veterinary prescriptions. The exercise ran for eight weeks and closed on 25 May 2012. Details of the exercise can be found on our website using this link: <http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/pdf/PrescriptionFraud.pdf>

Summary of responses

2. 23 responses were received and a list of the parties who responded is included at Annex A.
3. Of the responses received:
 - 13 had experienced alleged prescription fraud
 - 13 considered the current system for issuing prescriptions is inadequate
 - 11 would like a standard template for prescriptions while five would not
 - Nine consider the amendment to the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR) in 2009 to have had no effect on prescription tampering

Results of the exercise

Question 1:

Have you experienced any cases of prescription tampering, e.g. unauthorised changes to the details in the prescription or prescription forgery? If so, how many incidents have you encountered within the last 12 months (please provide details of the situation if possible).

4. 13 had experienced alleged prescription fraud and the incidents included:
 - Nine incidents of dates, type of medication, amounts and repeats altered
 - Three incidents of photocopies, printouts (not originals) hand written on plain paper prescriptions submitted
 - Three incidents involving the reuse of vets signature, logo, letter head
 - Four incidents where clients use online pharmacy prescription and forge vets signature
 - Two incidents where copies of electronic prescriptions were sent to several on-line suppliers

Question 2:

Is there a way we can improve or facilitate the reporting of instances where prescription tampering occurs?

5. The following suggestions for improvement have been made:

- Cases to be reported as part of the Accredited Internet Retailers Scheme where a report can be submitted on-line or via a quick link on homepage
- VMD to provide guidance to vets and pharmacists on the channels available to report
- VMD to send out a quarterly questionnaire to vets asking how much tampering has been identified and reported
- Pharmacists to feedback to vets how prescriptions are being used to be able to identify tampering
- VMD Inspectors to randomly check audit trail

Question 3:

Do you consider the current system for issuing veterinary prescriptions to be adequate? If not, do you have any suggestions to introduce controls on veterinary prescriptions which can be achieved through professional self-regulation or guidance?

6. 13 responses considered the current system for issuing prescriptions to be inadequate. One considered it to be adequate and anything more would be too onerous.

7. The following suggestions on self regulation/guidance were received:

- Regulation needs to be mandatory part of VMD and RCVS procedures
- Vets to send prescriptions direct to pharmacies
- VMD to re-instate the legal definition of 'signed and dated'
- Only supply on receipt of original. Ban photocopies and faxes (except in life-threatening situations that would be pre-agreed)
- Mandatory scheme for pharmacies to confirm details with issuing practice
- Write drug quantities in words and numbers
- Standard official prescription template with unique reference number
- All prescriptions to only be valid for 1 month
- No repeats
- Prescribers to sign with coloured ballpoint pen using pressure
- Prescribers to print name and qualification (not RCVS or AMTRA registration number)
- RCVS to publish register of veterinary practices
- Statement on prescriptions such as 'only valid if bears original signature'

Question 4:

Should all veterinary prescriptions be written in a standard, official template issued by a professional organisation?

8. 11 responses would like a standard template and five would not.

Question 5:

Has the amendment in 2009 to the VMR had any effect on prescription tampering?

9. Nine responses consider the amendment to have had no effect on prescription tampering with most feeling that the public are not aware of the VMR or do not regard veterinary medicines in the same respect as human medicines.

Next Steps:

10. The VMD is grateful for all those who took part in the exercise. We have considered the comments received and identified a number of areas where we are considering future improvements.

Area one:

Improve facilities for reporting and clarify how and to where to report any instances of prescription tampering or fraud.

Area two

Improve guidance both for those writing prescriptions and those receiving them, including information on; actions that can help to mitigate prescription fraud and how to pick up fraudulent or tampered prescriptions.

Area three

Improve feedback to the profession on the numbers of prescription misuse reports received by VMD.

Area four

Improve public knowledge and understanding of prescription misuse and the penalties involved.

Annex A

List of respondents to the information collecting exercise on Prescription Fraud

Number	Name	Organisation
1	Richard Weston	Anrich Vets
2	Clare Yeadon	Companion Care, Stratford Upon Avon
3	Felix Lai	Companion Care, Beckton
4	Richard Holborow	West Mount Vets Ltd.
5	Geoff Watson	Hyperdrug Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
6	Lisa Lines RVN	Queen Mother Hospital for Animals
7	Tim Newton	The Park Veterinary Practice
8	Simon J Baker	House and Jackson Veterinary Surgeons
9	Michael Hollywood	The George Veterinary Hospital
10	Christopher Probert	Kynoch Vets
11	Glen Foley	Well Pet Vets
12	Nick Bell	RVC lecturer and consultant
13	James Bagnall	Pet Prescription Ltd.
14	Judith Nelson	Agindustries
15	David Bailey	Vet Forensics
16	Chris J Button	Animed Direct / RCVS PSS Inspector
17	Anke Granger	Thompsons Veterinary Surgery
18	Ailsa Jones	Principal of Regional Veterinary Services - PDSA
19	Sally Everitt	BSAVA
20	James Wishart	James M Wishart & Associates
21	Rachael Gledhill	BVA
22	Anthony Roberts	RCVS
23	J S Brodie	Veterinary Drugs To Go