

Is this medicine safe for my pet?

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) has produced this leaflet to tell pet owners about the high standards animal medicines must meet, before they are allowed to be sold as veterinary medicines in the UK. This means that you can have confidence in the medicines you give to your pets.

What is the VMD?

The VMD is a Government Agency (and part of Defra – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). If you would like to know more about our work you can visit our website www.vmd.gov.uk.

Why control animal medicines?

The controls which VMD oversees protect the health of your pet, your own health and that of your family when using the medicine and they help to ensure the protection of the environment. Similar safeguards apply to medicines for farm animals so that the food which they produce is safe from any harmful residues of veterinary medicines.

What are the controls and how do they work?

Before a veterinary medicine can be sold or supplied in the UK, the VMD has to approve it. The medicine will need a Marketing Authorisation (MA), unless it comes under the Small Animal Exemption Scheme (SAES), is a registered homeopathic remedy or a nutritional supplement.

• Marketing Authorisation

Anyone who wants to place a product on the UK market must demonstrate that it is of consistently high quality, is safe for the environment, animals and the owners who give their pets the medicine and that it will work as it is intended to. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will grant a Marketing Authorisation only if the veterinarians and other scientists (pharmacists, chemists, toxicologists and eco-toxicologists) at the VMD are fully satisfied that the product meets the necessary standard. Special provisions are put in place on every veterinary medicine so that the VMD can check that there are no problems with how the medicine is working or its safety. These checks remain in place for as long as the medicine continues to be able to be sold in the UK.

• Small Animal Exemption Scheme

Products which are exempt from the full Marketing Authorisation requirements under the Small Animal Exemption Scheme may only be used in one or more of the following species: aquarium fish, caged birds, homing pigeons, terrarium animals, small rodents, ferrets and pet rabbits. The exemption applies only to pet animals that are not intended to produce food for human consumption and these products can only be sold in small quantities, under certain conditions.

• Registered Veterinary Homeopathic Remedy

A veterinary homeopathic remedy must be registered with the VMD in order to be marketed, unless it has been specially prepared for a specific animal.

How can I be sure that an animal medicine has been properly authorised?

Authorised medicines will have either a unique code number (starting with a Vm or EU for an authorised product or starting with Vh for a registered homeopathic remedy) or will include a statement "This veterinary medicine is marketed in accordance with the small animal exemption scheme" on the label and packaging. You should only buy or use these medicines. Occasionally your veterinarian may need to supply human medicines for your pet. This is sometimes permitted, but the veterinarian should explain any risks involved. Unauthorised medicines may be harmful to you, your pet or the environment, and may be of little or no use for treating your animal. If in doubt consult your veterinarian or pharmacist. Some medicines will also have the phrase "UK Authorised Veterinary Medicinal Product" or this logo so you can easily see that they have been authorised.



If you would like more information please see our leaflet on "How to Identify Veterinary Medicinal Products; Legal or Illegal?" (http://www.vmd.gov.uk/Publications/leaflets/Legal_Medicines.pdf)

What are the standards the VMD applies?

Before authorising a new pet medicine we examine all the evidence provided by the company on its:

• Quality

All medicines, including those for pets, must be manufactured in authorised premises to specifications approved by the VMD. This is to make sure that all batches of the product meet the necessary standards and are consistent. These standards are like those for human medicines and among other things, they ensure that the products are sterile if they need to be and that each tablet or bottle contains the correct amount of the drug.

• Safety

A medicine must be safe to use, without causing harm to the animal being treated, the people giving the animal the medicine or the environment. As with human medicines, animal medicines can have "side effects". These are carefully evaluated and the benefit of using the medicine must strongly outweigh any risks involved with its use. Human safety is always of paramount importance.

• Efficacy

All medicines should do what they claim to do; as long as the instructions on the label are followed properly and they are given to the types of animal for which they are authorised. Sometimes your

veterinarian may give you special instructions to use the product in a different way than is described on the label. This is "off label use" and your veterinarian should explain any risks to you in each case. Occasionally, your veterinarian may need to get permission from the VMD to import a veterinary medicine if there isn't a suitable one available in the UK.

The VMD works with similar agencies in other Member States in the European Union and with the European Medicines Agency to make sure that similar standards apply across Europe.

Are there controls on how medicines for pet animals are manufactured and distributed?

Yes there are. All manufacturers, wholesalers and importers of pet medicines in the EU have to be authorised. Regular inspections are carried out to ensure that the required standards are maintained and that products are being produced, stored and handled properly. Authorisations can be taken away and the products withdrawn from sale if these standards fall below acceptable levels.

Who can supply pet medicines?

There are several different types of pet medicine:

AVM – GSL (Authorised Veterinary Medicine – General Sales List).

These medicines can be sold in any retail outlet, such as a pet shop or supermarket. They are suitable for sale and use without veterinary supervision or advice from a pharmacist or other specially trained people: Suitably Qualified Persons (SQPs), as long as the product is used as directed on the label. Examples include certain flea products.

NFA – VPS (Non-Food Animal – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, Suitably Qualified Person).

These medicines can be sold to pet owners by registered veterinary surgeons, pharmacists or Suitably Qualified Persons. These SQPs have had special training and passed exams on the correct use of these types of medicines. Examples are certain dog, cat or horse wormers. The sale will only be made if the pet owner is known to have a dog, cat or horse.

POM-V (Prescription Only Medicines – Veterinarian). These medicines can be sold only by veterinarians for animals under their care. Alternatively a veterinarian can write a prescription so that the product can be bought from another veterinarian or a pharmacist from a registered pharmacy. There has to be a diagnosis by a veterinarian or veterinary advice before using a POM-V medicine.

Small Animal Exemption Scheme. Animal medicines which are exempt under the Small Animal Exemption Scheme may be sold or supplied in any retail outlet such as a pet shop or supermarket.

There is another category of veterinary medicines: POM-VPS but these are only for food producing animals and can be sold by veterinarians,

pharmacists and Suitably Qualified Persons. Authorised pet medicines should be clearly labeled with AVM-GSL, NFA-VPS or POM-V. Medicines from other sources may be illegal and may not have been manufactured from the correct ingredients.

Who enforces the controls on the supply of pet medicines?

These controls are enforced in Great Britain by inspectors from the VMD, Animal Health (a part of Defra) and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. In Northern Ireland the controls are enforced by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Can I buy medicines for my pet on the internet?

Yes you can. If the medicine you wish to buy requires a veterinary prescription, all reputable websites will ask for this prescription to be provided. Your veterinarian will be able to provide you with a written prescription if you ask for it. If an internet retailer offers to sell you a prescription medicine without asking to see your prescription at any stage in the transaction, the sale will be illegal and you may also have committed an offence by purchasing the medicine.

NFA-VPS medicines do not need a prescription but suppliers should provide advice to accompany them and you may be asked some questions about your pet (its weight, age etc) before completing your online purchase for these medicines.

AVM-GSL medicines and medicines under the Small Animal Exemption Scheme can be sold on the internet without any restrictions on who can buy or sell them.

What can I do to make sure that the medicine I give to my pet will be safe and effective?

Follow the instructions on the label and the instructions given to you by your veterinarian or Suitably Qualified Person. Even when a product has been properly authorised, it may only be safe and effective when it is used in accordance with the label instructions, which are checked and approved by the VMD.

What about side effects?

Harmful unexpected side effects from veterinary medicines are rare. Companies who market animal medicines are required by law to report to the VMD any side effects they are told about. If you have any side effects after giving your pet a medicine, tell your doctor. If your pet has a reaction, tell your veterinarian. The VMD wants to know about such cases too and you can report them to us directly via the links on our website or the address below. We run the Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme, which watches over the use of animal medicines and keeps records of side effects. This means we can spot and deal with

possible problems with an animal medicine which helps ensure the safety of people and their pets. If you want to know more about this scheme, or if you want the form to report a side effect, you can visit our website www.vmd.gov.uk, view http://www.vmd.gov.uk/General/Adverse/Leaflet_Public.pdf or phone us on 01932 338427.

Please use this freepost address to tell us about any **suspected adverse reactions to veterinary medicines**:

The Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme
Freepost KT4503
Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Woodham Lane
New Haw
Addlestone
Surrey KT15 3BR

What can I do with any unused medicine?

Please take any unused medicine back to your veterinarian or to a local pharmacy for disposal.

Where can I find out more about my pet's medicine?

For products authorised since November 2005, a summary of the assessment undertaken by the VMD will be available on our website under "Product Information Database" at <http://www.vmd.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/>

From there you can look up the name of the product in question and the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) and Public Assessment Report (PuAR) will contain a large amount of information on your product.

You can also phone the VMD on 01932 336911 for any additional assistance about veterinary medicines, or visit our website at www.vmd.gov.uk.

You can also reach us by e-mail at: postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

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www.vmd.gov.uk



ASSURING THE SAFETY, QUALITY & EFFICACY OF VETERINARY MEDICINES



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The Veterinary Medicines Directorate is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

www.vmd.gov.uk