



**Minutes of the 5th Open Meeting of the Veterinary Residues Committee, Mercure Holland House Hotel Cardiff
Wednesday, 14 October 2009,**

Members present:

Mrs Dorothy Craig	(Chairman)	DC
Mr Jon Averbs		JA
Mr Tim Brigstocke		TB
Mrs Sarah Buckley		SB
Dr Gill Clare		GC
Mr Andrew Grant		AG
Mrs Susan Knox		SK
Dr W John McCaughey		WJMcC
Mr Declan O'Rourke		DoR
Mr David Ralph		DR
Prof Mike Roberts		TMR
Mr Mark Ranson		MR

Others:

Dr Martin Illott	MI	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Mr Eric Crutcher	EC	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Mr David Webb	DW	" " " (Secretariat)
Mr Will Hollis	WH	" " " (Secretariat)
Mrs Sandra Russell	SR	" " "
Mr John Millward	JM	" " "
Mr John Points	JP	LGC Limited
Dr Glenn Kennedy	DGK	Agri-Food Biosciences Institute
Mr Matthew Sharman	MS	Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera)
Mr Andrew Spencer	AS	Food Standards Agency
Mr Rob Pettitt	RP	Animal Health
Mr Phil Sketchley	PS	National Office of Animal Health

Action Points

3.1.3 To identify to a small number of key languages that foreign agricultural workers would understand, so that the FSA could further discuss translation of the nicarbazin leaflet, with a view issuing further versions.

Action: TB and FSA

3.2.2 The FSA to liaise with its Food Contact Materials Branch over how to alert paper manufacturers over the concerns about the dyes in paper towels contaminating foods.

Action: AS

4.1.2 To consolidate the views of members on the FSA's consultation regarding Food Chain Information and supply it to the FSA.

Action: Members and Secretariat

4.1.5 To liaise with John Millward of the AMI to see if he could attend the March meeting to discuss in detail a full recent investigation.

Action: Secretariat

4.3.1 To supply the completed report on 'Skin-On' carcasses to the VRC for its view. This would be done by correspondence.

Action: AS and all Members

4.4.4 To write to the Scottish CVO over the need for testing of honey from treated hives and request site of the results of the testing.

Action: EC

6.1 To send ideas to the Secretariat for the 'Horizon Scanning' to be held in early December as soon as possible, to allow the Secretariat time to prepare background papers.

Action: All Members

6.2 To supply the Secretariat with a list of up-to-date contacts for food retailers and others to ensure requests for surveillance data go to the correct person.

Action: TB, MR and Secretariat

8.3 To investigate which group or committee had a role in emphasising the safety of veterinary vaccines.

Action: Secretariat

Declaration of interests

DC reminded Members that they should declare any interests before particular agenda items. The Committee could then decide if it was appropriate for the Member to speak during the item.

1. Apologies for absence/attendance

1.1 Stephen Lister, Shirley Price

1.2 The Committee welcomed Martin Ilott and Will Hollis. Martin had rejoined the VMD to head a new post-authorisations team. Will was helping in the Secretariat in Isabel Sharma's absence. The Committee sent her its best wishes.

1.2 **MI** told the Committee that the new team brought together Residues, Pharmacovigilance, the Good Manufacturing Inspection Team and the Animal Medicines Inspectorate. It would be a challenging role to integrate the team and said he would welcome any ideas from the Committee.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 **SB** reported that she had been present at the June meeting. Her name was to be added to the list of those present.

3. Matters arising

3.1 FSA Nicarbazin leaflet

- 3.1.1 The Committee followed up its previous interest in the translation of the FSA's guidance leaflet on nicarbazin into various eastern European languages, to reflect the varied nationalities of people working in agriculture. **AS** reported that he had taken advice and the FSA had not translated it. This had been based on cost and the likely benefit. The Committee repeated its view that without translation into a range of languages, the effect of the leaflet would be considerably diluted. As well as farm workers, some of the drivers for feed companies were from overseas.

- 3.1.2 The Committee heard that one levy board had translated leaflets into 13 languages, as it was considered important to reach the many workers whose first language was not English.

- 3.1.3 The Committee heard of a case where an overseas farm worker had been using sulphadiazine premix as a top dressing, with no withdrawal period. This had resulted in high residues. It was agreed that Committee would identify a small number of key languages and **AS** would discuss the matter further with FSA colleagues.

Action: TB and FSA

3.2 Dyed paper towels

- 3.2.2 The Committee again considered the issue of a fish sample that had been contaminated by malachite green in paper towels. Blue paper towels were often used by food companies. However, there was little legislation regarding substances used in paper products. While it was not known which of the dyes could cause a problem, there was an issue. It was suggested that the Department of Health may have an interest.

Action: AS

4. National Surveillance Scheme

VRC/09/26

4.1 Great Britain

- 4.1.1 **SR** reported on the positives up to 1/9/09 and the results of follow-up investigations. Five samples of cattle urine had tested non-compliant for zeranol. However, these were likely to be due to fungal contamination of feed. Two cattle urine samples had also been found to contain alpha boldenone. There was no evidence of abuse of this substance on the farm and the investigation concluded that faecal contamination was the likely cause.

4.1.2 A high residue of chlortetracycline had been detected in a sample of kidney from a calf. This had been sold through a market, but one week later it went for slaughter. The Committee considered that this underlined the need for Food Chain Information to accompany animals that were sold through markets. The Committee would be feeding in its views to the FSA's consultation on the subject.

Action: Members and Secretariat

4.1.3 The National Bee Unit had completed a follow-up investigation into a residue of 1,4-dichlorobenzene in honey. Further samples had been taken, but these were compliant.

4.1.4 One salmon sample had tested non-compliant for emamectin. Marine Scotland (formerly the Fisheries Research Services) had completed its follow-up investigation and the additional samples taken had been compliant.

4.1.5 The Committee noted that the VMD's Animals Medicines Inspectorate was carrying out follow-up investigations involving feed for the national Surveillance scheme. The Committee asked for a representative from the AMI to attend a future meeting.

Action: Secretariat

4.2 Northern Ireland

4.2.1 At the previous meeting, GK reported that a thiouracil residue had been detected in a sample of bovine urine in NI for the first time ever. A second such positive had also been recently detected. Sub-samples of both samples had been sent to the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL), which had confirmed its identity. No obvious cause of either occurrence had been discovered.

4.2.2 Two bovine urine samples had tested non-compliant for boldenone at concentrations in the range 20-30 µg/l, much higher than previous detections. A new method to help determine if future boldenone non-compliances were the result of faecal contamination of the sample was under development at the French NRL and sub-samples of the NI samples will be sent there for testing. The NI laboratory intends to set up the same method, as soon as possible.

4.2.3 A urine sample from a female bovine had tested non-compliant for clenbuterol. This was being investigated.

4.3 Skin-on lamb carcasses

4.3.1 Skin-on carcasses, prepared by burning off the fleece, are eaten by some ethnic groups. However apart from the feet, this type of preparation is not legal in the UK. The FSA was carrying out some research to see if such skin

on carcasses were allowed, would any veterinary residues be within acceptable limits. The report on this research was nearly completed. It would then go to the FSA Board. It was agreed that the final draft report would be sent the VRC for its view. This would be done by correspondence.

Action: AS and all Members

4.4 Use of Oxytetracycline to control foulbrood in bees

- 4.4.1 The proposed use of oxytetracycline in Scottish bees had been discussed at the planning meeting for the 2010 National Surveillance Scheme. There were significant problems in Scotland with both European and American foulbrood. To treat these diseases the Scots proposed using oxytetracycline in icing sugar. The Scottish Authorities hoped that all residues of oxytetracycline would have depleted before the start of the next honey season.
- 4.4.2 There was some concern that not all of the oxytetracycline would have decayed by the next honey season. This could lead to residues in the honey. While this was not of health concern, it would be against the Honey Regulations, which required honey to be pure. **SK** added that consumers expect honey to be pure. The National Surveillance Scheme had a possible 100 samples to allocate across the UK, some of which will be taken in Scotland. **AS** agreed with FSA Scotland that testing arrangements should be discussed with the VMD.
- 4.4.3 The FSA in Scotland had agreed the need to consult stakeholders and the possibility of an independent 'positive release' scheme had been mentioned. This is where a commodity is only allowed into the food chain after checks have shown it to be compliant with the law.
- 4.4.4 It was agreed that the Committee would write to the CVO Scotland over the arrangements for testing of honey from treated hives. The Committee would wish to have sight of any results from samples taken outside the NSS.

Action: EC

5. Non-Statutory Scheme

VRC/09/27

5.1 Results

- 5.1.1 Some 758 samples had been completed. One further non-compliant result had been reported. This was for ivermectin in beef muscle and had been the second such residue in the 2009 programme. The FSA did not consider the ivermectin residue to be a risk, however, Defra's CVO had written to the Uruguayan authorities asking to be kept informed of any follow-up action it took.

5.2 Brand name survey

- 5.2.1 The brand name survey had begun in October and all samples should be

collected by January 2010 in accordance with the schedule.

5.3 Consultation on the 2010 plan

5.3.1 The consultation documents had been circulated and copies were available for all of the attendees of the Open Meeting. The consultation would be complete toward the end of November.

5.4 Funding

5.4.1 The CVO's reply to the Committee's letter seeking assurances that the current budget will not be cut was not encouraging. **EC** reported that work is in progress to reconcile the different approaches taken by the non-statutory surveillance programme, which is paid for by Defra with all samples going to Fera, and the National Monitoring Plan (NMP).

5.4.2 The National Monitoring Plan fulfils UK obligations under the Vet Check Directive, with importers paying for the analysis of samples which go to laboratories chosen by the Border Inspection Posts. Defra is arranging a meeting with the FSA to agree a way forward and **EC** will keep the Committee informed. In the meantime arrangements for the 2010 plan are continuing as in previous years in the expectation that there will not be a substantial budget cut. **DC** recommended that funding is on the agenda for the next meeting.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 The Committee was reminded that the December Meeting was for 'Horizon Scanning'. Members should send in ideas to the Secretariat as soon as possible, as the Secretariat may have to prepare background papers.

Action: All Members

6.2 The Committee had asked about the second round of letters it had sent to retailers asking for sight of their surveillance. The Secretariat confirmed that no responses had been received. **TB** and **MR** agreed to supply a list of up-to-date contacts and liaise with the Secretariat. It was possible to make follow-up phone calls. It was considered important to know the extent of surveillance carried out by retailers and other food business operators, as the more results we have the greater the reassurance consumers have in the produce they purchase.

Action: TB, MR and Secretariat

VRC Open Meeting

7. Morning Session

Attendees heard a number of presentations:

7.1 Introduction to the Veterinary Residues Committee

- Dorothy Craig, Chairman, Veterinary Residues Committee

7.2 The need for veterinary medicines

- Tim Brigstocke, Veterinary Residues Committee

7.3 How residues surveillance fits into the authorisation process for veterinary medicines

- Declan O'Rourke, Veterinary Residues Committee

7.5 Consumer attitudes to animal medicines and vaccinations

- Phil Sketchley, Chief Executive, National Office of Animal Health

These are available on the VRC website at:

www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk

8. Morning question and answer session

8.1 **Phil Sketchley** (NOAH) asked the consumers on the Committee how reassurance could be given to consumers in relation to medicines and vaccine use. **SK** recalled that in a recent meeting with Defra on GM, the comments had been far less heated. More information helped trust. The meeting discussed that vaccines caused less concern, as there was little carry over into food.

8.3 **MI** indicated that there were toxoplasmic vaccines that had withdrawal periods of up to 6 weeks, while some newer, inactivated vaccines with novel adjuvants had withdrawal periods of 1-2 days. While this was not a safety issue, it could be a challenge to explain. This was acknowledged to be the remit if the VMD, as the VRC did not cover vaccines. The Secretariat agreed to investigate which group or committee had a role in emphasising the safety of veterinary vaccines.

Action: Secretariat

8.4 The use by dairies of residue limits less than the statutory Maximum Residues Limits in milk was questioned. The Committee confirmed that the NSS tested to the MRLs, which were based on the Acceptable Daily Intake or ADI. It was acknowledged that dairies often worked to lower limits, but this was a commercial decision between the dairy and the farmer. The statutory limits are set at the CVMP, a pan-European scientific body.

- 8.5 **PS** asked why there were arbitrarily set limits in dairies. It was explained that the hygiene regulations required that the dairies must use the most sensitive test that is available. It was confirmed that the National Surveillance scheme did use similar tests as the dairies to screen milk samples. They were less expensive and had a range of sensitivities, but would not give a concentration for any residues present. However, the confirmatory tests used sophisticated methods validated to EU requirements to identify the substance and quantify the concentration present.
- 8.6 **Ionwen Lewis** (Women's Farming and Food) congratulated the VRC on its excellent work. It had a good story to tell. She would be surprised if there were many rogue producers in Britain. There was more concern about food produced abroad. Food producers are also consumers and would not wish to produce food that they can't eat themselves.
- 8.7 **Ian Gibb** (Parr's farm) raised the need to get the permission of the EU to use vaccines against particular diseases. He also questioned the status of imports. While the VRC does not cover the use of vaccines, it acknowledged the need for testing imported foods – many consumers wanted reassurance that the testing was adequate. The meeting heard that the EU did publish Member States plans and results on its website. **DoR** indicated that before any country outside the EU exports to the EU, it has to be inspected and approved by the Food and Veterinary Office. The results of these inspections are published
- 8.8 The UK did test non-member states' produce at the Border Inspection Posts. However, if the produce is imported through another EU member state's border, it was then in the 'EU single market'. This means that if it later comes into the UK, we can't sample it at our Border Inspection Posts. This would be seen as interfering with the single market. However, it could still be sampled in shops and at wholesalers.
- 8.9 **Ann Sillick** (National Council Member, Townswomen's Guild) asked if it were possible for the VRC to try and get more publicity. **DC** sympathised with the suggestion, however, the Committee spent the entire budget on the Non-Statutory Surveillance Scheme. Money spent elsewhere meant less money for surveillance.
- 8.10 **Sally Joseph** (Women's Food and farming Union) suggested that the VRC could address consumer groups to help understanding. The Committee indicated it would welcome any invitations to address groups.

9. Afternoon session

Attendees heard presentations on:

9.1 Sampling and analysis for the National Surveillance Scheme

– John Points, LGC Ltd

9.2 What happens when a sample contains a residue above the limit?

- Rob Pettitt, Animal Health
- John Millward, Veterinary Medicines Directorate

9.3 Significance of veterinary medicine surveillance results for consumers

- Andrew Spencer, Food Standards Agency

These are available on the VRC website at:

www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk

10. Afternoon question and answer session

- 10.1 **Dee Clarke** (Syngenta) asked how the statutory Maximum Residue Limits were set. The meeting heard that the process was laid out in the VRC's Annual Report. A short explanation was made of the multi-stage scientific process of assessment. This confirmed that the process aims to ensure that consumers are not exposed to residues of potential health concern.
- 10.2 The UK's system of Horse Passports was discussed. It was seen as overly bureaucratic by some horse owners, who had no intention of putting their animals into the food chain. However, while the UK did not see the horse as food-producing animal, it did export a significant amount of meat to the continent for human consumption.
- 10.3 New EU legislation had come into force on 1 July 2009 to strengthen the horse passport legislation. This meant that all adult horses that did not already have passports would need to be micro-chipped, so that their identity could be determined. It also placed a duty on vets to see horses' passports before they prescribed medicines which would mean that the horse could not enter the food chain. If no passport was available, only those medicines allowed in food-producing horses would be allowed.
- 10.5 The continuing residues of nicarbazin in broiler liver were questioned. While it was noted that the percentage of non-compliant samples had dropped from some 25% some years ago to 8-9% currently, more work was required.
- 10.3 **Helen Thomas** (farmer) gave her first hand experience of samples being taken. Staff from Defra's Animal Health (AH) agency had been attending her farm to examine some ewes. At the end of this, the AH staff informed her that samples would be taken for residue testing. This had been a complete surprise.
- 10.4 **DC** thanked all of the presenters for their contributions. She also thanked all of the attendees, for giving their attention and a broad representation at the meeting.