

# Code of Practice on the Responsible Use of Animal Medicines on the Farm

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## 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 the controls on the authorisation, distribution and use of such medicines.

## Authorisation of animal medicines

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (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 help to design preventive programmes. You should therefore consult your veterinary surgeon when you require a diagnosis of disease in your animals or when you need to design or modify a preventive disease programme.

## Distribution of animal medicines

Once a disease has been diagnosed or a preventive programme designed, it may be necessary to obtain an animal medicine to treat or prevent it. All animal medicines in the UK are assigned a category, which are detailed in the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005.

## 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. 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.*

**Note:** *This code may be subject to amendment due to the implementation of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005.*

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## Plan ahead to prevent disease

1. **Prevention is the best policy.** Draw up a clear animal health plan, working with your veterinary surgeon to identify the best ways to prevent or treat disease in your animals and to ensure their welfare, including any necessary changes in farm practice. Ensure that your plan takes full account of all medicines you are using including those incorporated in pre-mixed feeding stuffs.
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 a disease problem. Pharmacists or AMTRA trained suitably qualified persons can provide information on the medicines that they can lawfully supply. Buy from authorised sources.
3. **Buy animal medicines from your veterinary surgeon, pharmacy, or registered agricultural merchant in the UK.** Sales from other sources may be illegal and the medicines may not be safe or effective and could harm your animals or the consumer.

*Note - Anyone wishing to buy medicated feed supplements to mix on their own premises must be registered with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (Telephone 020 7735 9141) or the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland. Anyone wishing to buy sheep dip will need to satisfy their merchant that they or their employee holds a relevant Certificate of Competence in the safe use of sheep dips from the National Proficiency Test Council (Telephone 024 7685 7300).*

4. **Only buy and use authorised animal medicines.** It is an offence to use unauthorised products unless legally prescribed by your veterinary surgeon. Authorised products can be identified by the inclusion of a unique code number on the label and packaging. Authorised medicated animal feed will be clearly marked.

*Note: Animal medicines dispensed by a veterinary surgeon or from a pharmacy (for example into smaller package sizes) or "specials" made under special arrangements by a manufacturing chemist will not necessarily have this number.*

5. Only buy enough of the appropriate medicine necessary for immediate use (or within their expiry date). Remember that it may be illegal to sell or pass on medicines to anyone else.

## Keep Proper Records

6. Keep a full record of all medicines you buy and those you use on your animals.  
It is a legal requirement to keep a record of all medicines administered to food producing animals, including those administered by your veterinary surgeon or in-feed. Veterinary Medicines must be kept in the format given in the FQAS Veterinary Medicine Record Book, and must be available for inspection by authorised persons.
7. **Keep all records for at least three years.** This is the minimum period required by law. Records relating to the use of prescription medicines must be kept for five years. You should also make these records available for official inspection by officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the local authority and to your veterinary surgeon if he/she wishes to see them.

## Administer medicines properly

8. **Make sure someone is personally responsible** for recording, safeguarding and administering medicines and for ensuring that any withdrawal period is observed.
9. **Medicines should be handled and administered only by someone competent to do so** or under their supervision. Your veterinary surgeon will be able to help with training in the right way to administer animal medicines, including injections. Remember that 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 feeding stuffs.  
  
*Note: A separate Guidance Note on the handling of medicated feeding stuffs is available on request from VMD (telephone 01932 336911).*
10. **Avoid the unnecessary use of medicines.** Only when you are absolutely sure they are necessary should you go ahead with treatment.
11. **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, product leaflet and safety data sheet or ask your supplier. It is important that the correct dosage is used and that it is administered

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properly. This is particularly important where a medicine is administered by injection.

**Note:** *A separate Guidance Note on how to reduce the risk of spreading infection when giving single or multiple injections is set out in the Appendix on page 8.*

12. **Check the Expiry Date on the label.** Do not use any medicine which is past its expiry date. Dispose of any out of date animal medicine in accordance with the advice given in paragraph 22 and 23 of this Code.
13. **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 medicines on animals other than the ones for which they were originally prescribed. It may be illegal to do so.
14. **Always complete the treatment programme.**
15. **If in any doubt about any aspect of administering any animal medicine, consult your veterinary surgeon.**

## **Take proper precautions**

16. **Always observe all of the operator safety instructions on the label.**

*Note: 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 (telephone 01787 881165).*

17. Keep a list of emergency 'phone numbers at hand. These should include your local doctor, hospital, veterinary surgeon and pharmacist.

## **Observe Withdrawal periods**

18. Strictly observe any withdrawal period stated on the label for the medicine, or indicated by your veterinary surgeon, between the end of treatment and the slaughter of the animal or the taking of eggs or milk for human consumption. It is an offence to slaughter for human consumption, or to sell for slaughter for human consumption, any animal which has not completed its withdrawal period. Remember

that if any 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, and you should consult your veterinary surgeon about what withdrawal period is appropriate in those circumstances.

**Note:** *Guidance on withdrawal periods for animal medicines is available on the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH) website: [www.noah.co.uk](http://www.noah.co.uk)*

## Store Medicines Safely

19. Store medicines in accordance with the instructions on the label. Storage temperature can be critical to maintain the 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. Where medicated feed is stored on farm, the feed bins should be clearly labelled.
20. **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.

## Dispose of unused medicines safely

21. **Never sell or pass on unused medicines to anyone else.** Remember that it may be illegal to do so.
22. **Do not hoard partly used medicines.** Safely dispose of unused or out-of-date medicines and containers and application equipment (including needles) when you finish the treatment for which they were intended. Always follow any advice on the label about disposal. Never dispose of such items with domestic rubbish or pour animal medicines down the drain or toilet. Your veterinary surgeon may be able to supply you with containers for their safe disposal.

**Note:** *Separate guidance on the safe disposal of animal medicines is available in the HSE Guidance Note (A5531) "Veterinary Medicines: Safe Use by Farmers and Other Animal Handlers" available free of charge from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA (telephone 01787 881165).*

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23. **Remember that used sheep dips and similar animal medicines present a particular hazard for the environment.** Special care must be taken with their disposal to ensure that they do not contaminate any watercourses or you may be committing an offence.

*Note: Copies of the guidance note “Disposal of Waste Agricultural Pesticides to Land: Guidance on Compliance for Farmers and Growers” is available from the DOE Agricultural Regulations Unit (Tel: 028 9025 4824). Under the Groundwater Regulations 1998 a prior authorisation must be obtained before disposing of sheep dips and similar medicines.*

## APPENDIX

### INJECTIONS

The following simple rules will help to reduce the risks of spreading infection when giving single or multiple injections.

- a. Disposable needles and syringes should be used where possible, take care to dispose of them safely, in a solid container.
- b. Ensure that all other equipment (needles, syringes, tubing etc.) is cleansed and sterilised\* before and after use. During use ensure that all equipment is left on a clean surface.
- c. If you are using a syringe which requires to be filled from the bottle between doses, use one sterile needle left in the bottle during use to fill the syringe and a separate needle to inject the animal.
- d. In the case of an automatic refill syringe, if an air bleed is required to equalise pressure as the injection fluid is withdrawn, use a sterile needle for this purpose;
- e. Use a sterile needle for the injection, preferably using a fresh needle for each animal or at least changing it frequently (every 10 or 12 animals) and sterilising\* it between animals;
- f. Make the injection through an area of clean, dry skin. Do not inject through wet or dirty skin (clearly fish have to be excepted);
- g. All partially used bottles of vaccines should be destroyed safely and not used again, as puncture of the rubber cap can result in the contamination of the remaining contents;
- h. If the operator is accidentally injected, medical help should be



sought immediately. Remember, show the product label and other literature to the medical team involved.

\* unless the product to be used warns against this, needles should be sterilised by boiling for 20 minutes, immersing in surgical spirit, or washing in disinfectant recommended for instrument sterilisation. General purpose disinfectants are dangerous if injected.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

FQAS Ref No. \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign and date to indicate that you have read and understood this Code.