

- ii. a holder of a manufacturing authorisation may import an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product if it is for the purpose of the manufacture of a veterinary medicinal product for which the importer is permitted to manufacture
- iii. if the responsible veterinarian holds a current SIC or STC for a product authorised outside the UK, naming them as the importer, they may legally import the product in accordance with the relevant certificate
- iv. an authorised wholesale dealer may import an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product in accordance with a current WDIC, in advance of supplying the product to a veterinarian holding a current SIC or STC for that product
- v. an authorised wholesale dealer may import an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product for the purposes of re-export
- vi. special rules apply to the use of unauthorised veterinary medicinal products in experimental trials. Contact the VMD directly for further information.

### What assurances do I have that veterinary medicines brought on the internet are legal?

Animal owners are now more regularly looking to buy veterinary medicines online. Whilst many of the sites supplying veterinary medicines operate legally there are some that don't and these pose a risk to your animals and to you as well. We have therefore developed the Accredited Internet Retailer Scheme (AIRS) to help you buy veterinary medicines safely.

### How will the scheme help you?

AIRS will help you as an online buyer of veterinary medicines by:

- i. showing you that the retailer has voluntarily applied for and has been granted accreditation
- ii. confirming that we have inspected the website and found that it complies with the Scheme's requirements and the Veterinary Medicines Regulations
- iii. reducing the risk of you buying unauthorised veterinary medicines
- iv. reducing the risk of you buying inappropriate or ineffective veterinary medicines for your animals.

You can also check an internet retailer against the list of accredited retailers' websites by looking on the relevant page of the VMD website and clicking on the retailer link. Also, if you are on a retailer website displaying our logo you should be able to click on the logo to link back to its entry on our website.

### Where can I get more information?

The VMD produces a number of Veterinary Medicines Guidance Notes (VMGN's) and other information, which are available on the VMD website [www.vmd.defra.gov.uk](http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk). There is also a series of information leaflets available, e.g.

- The Work of the VMD
- Availability of Veterinary Medicines
- Is this Medicine Safe for my Pet?
- Adverse Event Reporting
- VMD's Accredited Internet Retailer Scheme

**You can also phone the VMD on 01932 336911 for any additional assistance about veterinary medicines. Alternatively email us at: [postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk)**

Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA) is an independent regulatory body whose task is to ensure that the marketing and distribution of animal medicines in the UK is undertaken in a responsible manner by AMTRA qualified persons.

Contact details:

**Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority  
Unit 1C, Woolpit Business Park  
Windmill Avenue  
Woolpit  
Bury St Edmunds  
IP30 9UP**

**Tel: +44 (0)1359 245801  
Fax: +44 (0)1359 242569  
email: [info@amtra.org.uk](mailto:info@amtra.org.uk)**

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the independent regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises in Great Britain. You can contact them on their enquiry line on 020 3365 3400 or email them via their website <http://pharmacyregulation.org/>

Information correct as of February 2014  
02/14

**VMD DIRECTORATE**

**ASSURING THE SAFETY, QUALITY & EFFICACY OF VETERINARY MEDICINES**

# How to Identify Veterinary Medicinal Products: Legal or Illegal?

**Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs**

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

[www.vmd.defra.gov.uk](http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk)

**Veterinary Medicinal Products (VMPs) are defined as any substance or combination of substances presented for treatment or prevention of disease in animals. In addition, substances are considered to be medicinal if they are used in, or administered to, animals with a view to either restoring, correcting or modifying physiological functions by exerting a pharmacological, immunological, or metabolic action, or in making a medical diagnosis. In other words if a product is administered to an animal to treat or to prevent disease or a physiological disorder, or if it is used by a vet as a means of diagnosing a condition, then it will generally be classed as a veterinary medicine.**

**The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is the authority responsible for regulating and authorising veterinary medicines in the UK in accordance with the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR).**



All veterinary medicines administered in the UK must be granted an authorisation by the VMD. The only exceptions are veterinary medicines sold under the Exemption for small pet animals. The process of authorisation ensures the safety, quality and efficacy of all UK veterinary medicines.

### **Importation, possession or supply, or administration to animals of unauthorised medicines is illegal under the VMR.**

In all cases, the labelling of a UK authorised veterinary medicine will be in English. However, it is permitted for companies to use multi-lingual labels as long as one of the languages is English.

A product that is authorised for sale in the UK is one that is labelled for the UK market and bears a marketing authorisation number. A UK marketing authorisation can be identified by the letters Vm or Vh followed by a five-digit code, an oblique and a four-digit code, or by an EU prefixed authorisation number formatted as below:

e.g. Vm 04321/4001  
Vh 05467/4007  
EU/1/99/099/001-001

Only products that display an authorisation number in one of these formats should be used.

However special dispensation to hold, supply and administer unauthorised veterinary medicines may be made by the VMD to vets on a case by case basis through the provisions of the Special Import Certificate (SIC) and Special Treatment Certificate (STC) schemes. SICs and STCs are product specific and usually for a named animal or herd. These certificates can only be applied for and held by the veterinarian responsible for the animal. Products imported under such certificates will be labelled in the language of the original country and will not have a UK marketing authorisation number.

The VMR give powers to authorised inspectors that allow them to seize and destroy any veterinary medicine that does not comply with the regulations. Failure to comply with the VMR is also an offence and prosecutions do occur.

A full list of UK authorised veterinary medicines can be found on the Product Information Database available on our website [www.vmd.defra.gov.uk](http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk).

The VMR set out the distribution categories for UK veterinary medicinal products to define who may sell certain types of products. These are:

- Prescription Only Medicine – Veterinarian Only (POM-V)
- Prescription Only Medicine – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, SQP (POM-VPS)
- Non-Food Animal – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, SQP (NFA-VPS)
- Authorised Veterinary Medicine – General Sales List (AVM-GSL)

SQP refers to a Suitably Qualified Person who is registered with a body approved under the VMR. Currently the Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA) is the only approved body.

### **Schedule 6 Exemption for small pet animals**

The Exemption for small pet animals permits certain veterinary medicines to be marketed without the requirements for a marketing authorisation. This exemption applies to medicines for administration to aquarium animals, homing pigeons, caged birds, ferrets, rabbits, small rodents and terrarium animals. Although these products are exempted from the need to hold a marketing authorisation, they are still legally classified as veterinary medicines and must meet all the requirements of the VMR relating to manufacture and wholesale.

### **Can I import a veterinary medicine?**

Under the VMR, veterinary medicines may only be imported into the UK under the following circumstances:

- If the product has a current UK marketing authorisation and is labelled for the UK market:
  - i. the holder of the marketing authorisation may import the product
  - ii. the holder of a manufacturing authorisation may import a product to which the authorisation refers
  - iii. an authorised wholesale dealer may import a product if the authorisation covers the product, the importation is in accordance with a WDIC (Wholesale Dealers Import Certificate), and the holder of the marketing authorisation has been informed in writing
  - iv. a veterinary surgeon may import any UK authorised veterinary medicinal product
  - v. a suitably qualified person may import a UK authorised product he/she is permitted to supply
  - vi. authorised veterinary medicines in the category AVM-GSL (Authorised Veterinary Medicine – General Sales List) may be imported without restriction.
- If the product does not have a current UK marketing authorisation, there are certain circumstances where importation may be allowed:
  - i. a holder of a marketing authorisation may import an unauthorised veterinary medicinal product if it is for the purpose of the manufacture of a veterinary medicinal product for which the importer holds the marketing authorisation