Vaccination schedules

The Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC), a publicly available document produced following the authorisation of a veterinary vaccine, provides information on the authorised use of the product and should be referenced by the veterinary surgeon when prescribing the product. The SPCs for authorised veterinary medicines in the UK are publicly available via the VMD's product database: www.vmd.gov.uk/ProductsInformationDatabase/

High quality scientific data are available to support the primary and re-vaccination (booster) schedules. These data have been assessed by the VMD to ensure that the vaccine provides the required onset and duration of immunity claimed by the manufacturer. Veterinary surgeons will take account of these recommendations and any warnings on the SPC alongside any specific factors for the individual animal, for example the level of maternally derived antibodies, or the local disease situation when devising the optimum vaccination schedule for each animal.

Re-vaccination intervals

The VMD's recommendations are based on scientific evidence and that the number of doses administered should be optimised based on a benefit-risk analysis for each individual animal. Products providing longer duration of immunity will have this indicated in their SPC. Re-vaccination intervals specified on the SPC are supported by data from duration of immunity studies that confirm the vaccine is effective for the minimum period defined.

Many factors influence the effectiveness of vaccines and the need for re-vaccination. A vaccination programme for an individual animal should be discussed and agreed between the veterinary surgeon and client. A veterinary surgeon is empowered to make a clinical benefit/risk judgement based on many factors including the age, health, vaccination history, breeding status, home environment, likely exposure to other animals, travel plans, lifestyle and disease prevalence in the local area. Where a veterinary surgeon decides to use either a shorter or longer re-vaccination period as compared to the SPC this constitutes off-label use and the veterinary surgeon takes responsibility for this decision and is recommended to agree their responsibility for this decision and is recommended to agree their

Serological testing as an alternative to vaccination has been reviewed by several notable experts in the field of veterinary diagnostics. Serology provides some useful additional information on the immune status of an animal but should be used alongside other factors and not as the sole determinant of vaccination frequency. Antibody titre testing to determine if the animal needs re-vaccination is available for canine adenovirus, distemper virus, and parvovirus and for feline calicivirus, herpesvirus and panleukopenia virus. Owners should seek veterinary advice when deciding between serological testing and re-vaccination.

Adverse events following vaccination

As with any medicinal product, adverse events can be associated with the use of veterinary vaccines. The potential for these to occur is carefully evaluated by the VMD at the time the product is assessed and before it can be marketed in the UK. Adverse events to veterinary products are monitored by the Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme (SARRS) which undertakes veterinary pharmacovigilance in the UK. The scheme is run by a team of specialists at the VMD. The benefits of the vaccine must strongly outweigh any potential risk involved with its use both at the time of administration and continually thereafter.

Adverse reactions to a vaccine are rare. When they do occur, they are adverse events or reactions in a veterinary medicine. The benefits of the vaccine must strongly outweigh any potential risk involved with its use both at the time of administration and continually thereafter.

A veterinary surgeon is in a unique position to observe adverse reactions and have a key role in the reporting system. Diligent reporting of adverse reactions can provide useful information related to the side effects of any veterinary medicinal product. Advice on the reporting of adverse events can be found on the VMD website (www.vmd.gov.uk/vetmeds) and adverse events can be reported using the online report form available on the VMD website (www.vmd.gov.uk).

Veterinary surgeons are provided with feedback on adverse events through the SARRS Report which is published annually in The Veterinary Record. This report identifies any trends which emerged during the year. Quarterly summaries of individual adverse reactions reported to the VMD are published on the VMD website www.vmd.gov.uk/SARSQ bystanders/default.htm

Homeopathic 'vaccines'

Nosodes and sarcodes (homeopathic remedies derived from unwell or healthy animals respectively) on the UK market have not been registered under the Homeopathic (simplified) Registration scheme of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations which is intended to provide assurance that products are produced to good quality standards and are safe. Nosodes and sarcodes have the potential to contain virulent pathogenic organisms from their source material which may pose a serious disease risk to the pet concerned, or even to human health. Homeopathic remedies have not been assessed so rigorously if they provide any protection to the animal. Without evidence of effectiveness, homeopathic nosodes and sarcodes may pose greater risk to pets by leaving them susceptible to disease.

You can also phone the VMD on 01932 336911 for any additional assistance about veterinary medicines.
Withdrawn - 2016/233 - 09/12/16