



Veterinary Products Committee

Published minutes

A summary of the minutes of the Veterinary Products Committee Meeting held on 4 February 2021 by video conference

Chairman – Professor Malcolm Bennett BVSc, PhD, MRCVS, FRCPath, FHEA
Secretary – Sandra Russell

Members

Mrs H Ballantyne
Dr K Burnett
Prof D Cavanagh
Dr Yu-Mei Ruby Chang
Ms S Harmer
Mr M Jelley
Dr D Killick
Dr E Kubiak
Mr S Lister
Prof J Matthews
Mr D O'Rourke
Prof C Robertson
Mr R Soutar
Mr J Statham
Ms A Tarr
Mr E Vega
Mr M White

Officials: may be present for all or part of the meeting or for specific agenda items.

VMD

Ms A Seager
Dr G Diesel
Dr G Clarke
Dr R Cooney
Mr K Stapleton
Mr G Hall
Ms S Brown
Mr C Abbott

Other

Ms K Foxall (PHE)
Ms F Kearney (DAERA)
Ms R Perkins (University of Sussex)
Prof D Goulson (University of Sussex)
Dr M Whitehead

Agenda

1. Announcements and apologies for absence
2. Declaration of interests
3. Veterinary flea products and pesticide contamination of waterways:
a research update by Rosemary Perkins, David Goulson, and Martin Whitehead
4. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020
5. Matters arising from the minutes
 - 5.1. Raising awareness of needlestick injuries
 - 5.2. Injuries relating to veterinary medicines (HSE)
 - 5.3. Role of VMPs in spread of AMR in the environment
 - 5.4. Environmental impact of ectoparasiticides
 - 5.5. VMD and VPC Open meeting 2020
6. UK Pharmacovigilance Report for August to November 2020
7. Evaluation of VMD assessment reports: results
8. Post EU activities
9. Items for information
10. Horizon scanning
11. Any other business
12. Date of next meeting

Announcements and apologies for absence

- 1.1. The Chairman reminded Members and Officials that all papers, unless otherwise indicated, and discussions of the Committee are confidential. No information relating to the proceedings of the Committee or papers presented to the Committee may be divulged to any third party.
- 1.2. Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Bennett, Dr Mackay and Professor Weeks.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1. The Chairman reminded Members of the procedure for declaring interests at VPC meetings. Interests declared were minuted under the individual items.

3. Veterinary flea products and pesticide contamination of waterways: a research update by Rosemary Perkins, David Goulson, and Martin Whitehead

- 3.1. Rosemary Perkins and David Goulson of the University of Sussex and Martin Whitehead, Chipping Norton Veterinary Hospital, had carried out research funded by the VMD on the effects of veterinary flea products and pesticides on waterways and were invited to the committee to give an update. They had looked at Environment Agency monitoring data in English Freshwaters from 2016-2018 and found that fipronil and imidacloprid contamination is very common, often above published thresholds. Their effect on freshwater ecosystems in the UK is currently unclear, but studies have indicated that both have chemicals have a harmful effect, at lower levels than those found in the UK, on a range of aquatic invertebrates and on insectivorous birds. Potential sources are thought to be plant protection products, biocidal products and veterinary medicinal products; a priority is to investigate what fraction of applied flea product enters waterways from the pet population, and through what pathways.
- 3.2. Further discussion was wide ranging and included: the effects of these and similar chemicals on biodiversity and ecosystem function, determining the sources of contamination and in particular the contribution of veterinary medicines, the bioavailability of these chemicals, other ectoparasiticides, the reversibility of environmental effects, potential removal of chemicals from the environment (e.g. wastewater treatment) and animal treatment, particularly prophylactic regimens.
- 3.3. It was suggested that the VPC's working group be expanded in light of the developing knowledge base and increased interest in the issues (see 5.4.2).

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020

- 4.1. The Committee had cleared the minutes of the October meeting by correspondence and the Summary minutes were available on the VPC website (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterinary-products-committee/about/membership).

5. Matters arising from the minutes

- 5.1. February 2020 minute 5.2.2: Raising awareness of needlestick injuries
 - 5.1.1 Helen Ballantyne had produced several pieces to raise awareness of needlestick injuries. These included an article for Veterinary Nursing Journal, and blogs for the Royal College of Nursing and British Veterinary Association websites. The RCN are also looking to publish a blog on the emergency care practitioners' forum and one of their journals.
- 5.2. February 2020 minute 5.2.4: Injuries relating to veterinary medicines
 - 5.2.1 VMD reported that an MoU is being developed with HSE for exchanging data on injuries relating to veterinary medicines.
- 5.3. October 2020 minute 3.1: VMPs in spread of AMR in the environment
 - 5.3.1 The information considered at the last meeting on the role of VMPs in spreading AMR in the environment had been sent to Defra for information.

5.4. **October 2020 minute 5.6.1: Environmental impact of ectoparasiticides**

5.4.1 It was noted that Andrea Tarr had given a presentation on the environmental impact of ectoparasiticides for the VMD/VPC open meeting. The topic continues to develop considerable interest and VPC members had responded to a recent article about it in the Vet Record, emphasising that there are a lot of evidence gaps and some of these can be resolved without changing the regulations, although more research needs to be done.

5.4.2 The Committee agreed to extend the membership of its working group looking at this issue to other interested bodies so that they can work together to define the extent of the problems and agree a common strategy. Other bodies which could be approached were discussed. Members were asked to email suggestions to the Chairman to discuss with VMD before the next meeting.

5.5. **October 2020 minute 9.1: VMD and VPC Open meeting 2020**

5.5.1 VMD reported that over 2000 people attended the online VMD and VPC Open meetings in November which was a very positive outcome. Future meetings are likely to be blended events involving physical and virtual meetings. The Committee will consider at its next meeting what topics to cover at this year's event.

6. **The UK Pharmacovigilance report**

6.1. **Introduction**

6.1.1 The Committee considered and commented upon the Pharmacovigilance Report for August to November 2020, which was presented by the head of the VMD's Pharmacovigilance Unit.

6.2. **Suspected adverse event reports in humans**

6.2.1 A member submitted a question in relation to the use of an extemporaneous product, and a human adverse event report where an owner had developed hypothyroidism five months after start of treatment of the cat. The member questioned whether VMD were aware of the volumes of these products being used and therefore the potential risk to the public. VMD confirmed that they currently do not have information on the volumes of these products sold but are in the process of discussing this issue with the legislation team to determine what actions VMD can take and the information that can be requested.

6.2.2 A member commented on the reports of finger lacerations in vets following use of a product for dogs. At the last meeting VMD had confirmed that further warnings would be added to the product label and therefore the member questioned if the events which occurred during this surveillance period pre-dated these changes. VMD confirmed that the variation to change the packaging had only recently been approved and therefore it would take time for these changes to come through on the packaging in the market. The cases noted during this surveillance period will have taken place prior to the changes in the label.

6.3. **Suspected adverse event reports in animals**

6.3.1 A member noted a signal for death following use of a product for pigs where an assessor had commented that the incidence of death was very rare. They also stated "In total 54 deaths from possible or confirmed hypersensitivity out of 4059 animals administered the product." VMD confirmed that the very rare incidence mentioned is based on all reports received and total sales and would provide further information on the cases concerned.

Post-meeting note: there were 54 deaths recorded due to hypersensitivity out of 4059 animals treated in the cases that involved hypersensitivity. So the total figure (4059) does not include all the animals that were administered the product and did not experience an adverse event or those events not involving hypersensitivity. Therefore, the overall incidence of death, is considered very rare.

6.4. Environmental incidents

6.4.1 No environmental incidents were received during this surveillance period.

7. Evaluation of VMD assessment reports: results

- 7.1. The Committee discussed the summary of members' evaluations of four products selected at the last meeting. It was agreed that VMD would respond in writing to the comments members had provided with their evaluations. Members would use this to provide an overall score of effectiveness which they would then send to VMD by correspondence before the next meeting.
- 7.2. The scoring mechanism to be used for future exercises would be discussed at the next meeting.

8. Post EU Transition Period activities

- 8.1. VMD reported on activities following the end of the transition period and how it is working with industry to minimise disruptions to supplies at borders. It has formalised relationships with other countries assess and authorise new products and has obtained membership of VICH. Companies are using the information hub for details of the new application processes in place. The new legislation to grant VMD primary powers is nearing completion.
- 8.2. The Committee congratulated the VMD on all the work it has done to achieve a successful transition out of the EU. It was agreed that this agenda item would focus on the effects of legislation changes, including European legislation, in the future.
- 8.3. VMD provided details of its recent re-organisation.

9. Items for information

- 9.1. The following items for information are publicly available:
- 9.1.1 The Veterinary Medicines Directorate Product Information Database (<http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/>).
- 9.2. The following items for information are not publicly available:
- 9.2.1 Report to the VPC on new ATC applications.
- 9.2.2 Review of Special Import activity.
- 9.2.2.1. VMD responded to members' questions which had been received in advance of the meeting and explained the different ways that it ensures certificates are only granted when there is a need to import a product for use under the cascade, although ultimate responsibility lies with the prescribing veterinary surgeon.
- 9.2.2.2. VMD were asked to look into adding active ingredient information to future reports.
- 9.2.3 Report to the VPC on new MA applications granted.
- 9.2.4 Report from the Scientific Secretariat and the Biological Committee.

10. Horizon scanning: issues for consideration

- 10.1. It was agreed that Mr Statham and Prof Weeks would speak at the next meeting on the effect of climate change on diseases and the use of veterinary medicines.
- 10.2. The committee reviewed sales information for a product which had changed legal distribution category from POM-V to POM-VPS and noted that some increase in sales had been observed that coincided with appropriate usage and it was not a cause for concern.

Post meeting note: In response to a question about the commitment to conduct a surveillance study of efficacy for this product, VMD can report the data for the follow-up efficacy study is not currently due but will be shared with the committee once available.

10.3. The overuse of anthelmintics and the risk of anthelmintic resistance developing were discussed, and it was agreed that VPC would make the Animal Health and Welfare Board aware of their concerns.

11. Any other business

11.1. Members were asked to submit any outstanding expenses claims in a timely manner so they can be processed before the end of the financial year.

11.2. In response to a member's question, VMD reported that they were still receiving the usual adverse event reports following exit from the EU and were able to ask for third country reports and had no concerns in this area.

12. Date of next meeting

12.1. The next meeting of the VPC will be on 20 May 2021 at the VMD, Woodham Lane, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey.