

MINUTES OF VMD MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

Members

Julia Drown (Chair)
David Catlow
Philippa Hardwick
Timothy Riley

Present

Abigail Seager – VMD
Gavin Hall - VMD
Mike Griffiths – VMD
Julian Flexman - VMD
Marian Bos – VMD
John Millward - VMD
Carol Siwicka - VMD
Chris Abbott – VMD (note taker)

1. Announcements and apologies for absence

1.1 There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of interest in the matters to be discussed

2.1 None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021

VMDMB 21/24

3.1 The minutes were agreed.

4. Matters Arising/Actions

VMDMB 21/25

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5. Information Coordination & Engagement (ICE) Pack

VMDMB 21/26 & 27

5.1 The Head of Information Coordination & Engagement (ICE), Carol Siwicka, explained that VMD's Communications and Engagement Strategy has been replaced with the ICE 'Pack'. This will be used to record, deliver and evaluate VMD's communications activities in a way that amplifies its messages and ensures all stakeholders are kept informed in an appropriate and targeted way. It will also be used to improve internal communications and be linked to business priorities. Members were pleased with the activities set out in the new strategy and the opportunity it provides for explaining to the public how the VMD operates. Some gaps and wording changes were noted and Carol would take these on board before the Pack goes live in 2022. The Board agreed that it will put VMD in an even stronger place.

6. Focus topic: Confidence in Prescribing

6.1 The Head of the Inspections section, John Millward, explained the different ways of prescribing used in the UK involving veterinary surgeons, pharmacists and suitably qualified persons (SQPs). Issues which affected confidence included the potential misuse of e-prescriptions and insufficient information being required for online sales. VMD takes action to mitigate these through inspections and investigations. It is able to take down online pharmacies which are mis-selling medicines and has developed good relationships with large online retailers. A new MoU has been signed with the RCVS to cover the shared inspections of veterinary practice partners. VMD has limited control over some areas but still tries to be involved where it can provide a positive influence. A meeting has been arranged with the General Pharmacy Council (GPhC) following the implementation of an updated MoU last year that is intended to improve the information we have about prescribing and supply of veterinary medicines by pharmacists; and we will contact groups representing pharmacists to find out how they are prescribing. It has been noted the quality of training and the certification process for SQPs has improved, although VMD has found their quality variable in practice and this was something the Board would like to revisit.

6.2 Members were interested in the possibilities for extending prescribing powers to other groups to increase efficiency as is apparent in the medical profession. It was noted that qualifications are available to veterinary nurses and farmers through which they can become SQPs and VMD intends to look at what further measures it could introduce through amendments to legislation after the current major revision of the regulations is completed.

7. Report from Audit Committee on risk discussions

7.1 The Board was content to accept the VMD's risk policy as considered in the audit committee and was comfortable with its risk appetite.

8. CEO's Report

8.1 VMD's new CEO, Abi Seager, explained that her vision statement for the VMD was for it to be recognised worldwide as a centre of excellence for the provision of regulatory services and expertise for the availability of safe and effective veterinary medicines. She will work with the section heads to develop their own vision statements. The VMD was having to deal with a lot of continuous changes and it was important these were managed properly at a pace which was acceptable to staff and that they felt respected and included. It was noticeable that behaviours had slipped due to remote working and subsequent difficulties achieving a good work/life balance and staff morale needed raising through support and careful prioritisation of work.

8.2 The work priorities had not changed and there was still an emphasis on developing international connections. VMD and FDA had just agreed a new MRA to cover veterinary work and the free trade agreement with New Zealand included veterinary medicines for the first time. Global partnerships were being established with countries including Canada, Mexico and India.

8.3 The consultation on the VMRs cannot be completed this year but an informal consultation with stakeholders on the SIs would be held. The EU ban on zinc oxide needs to be implemented in UK law but the option to derogate is being looked at and communication is being kept open with farmers.

9. Delivery against the Business Plan 2021/22

VMDMB 21/29

9.1 The delivery report was reviewed.

10. Finance report

VMDMB 21/30

10.1 The finance report was noted.

11. Management Board work plan

VMDMB 21/28

11.1 It was agreed to review environmental issues at the next meeting, including routes to authorisation for products which reduce emissions and the environmental consequences of our activities.

12. Any other business

12.1 None.

13. Dates of future meetings

13.1 The next meeting would be held on 15 December.

**Veterinary Medicines Directorate
October 2021**