



**Veterinary
Medicines
Directorate**

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate

**The Government's response to the Animal Sentience Committee's assessment
of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (2013) revisions**

September 2024

**Presented to Parliament pursuant to
Section 3 of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022**



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ISBN 978-1-5286-5116-5

E03173261 09/24

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office

The Government's response to the Animal Sentience Committee's assessment of Veterinary Medicines Regulations (2013) revisions

This is the Government's formal response to the Animal Sentience Committee's ['Assessment of Veterinary Medicines Regulations \(2013\) revisions'](#), published on 1 March 2024. We express our thanks to the committee for their engagement, assessment and recommendations, which we have carefully considered.

We are pleased to note that the committee is satisfied that adequate due regard has been given to animal welfare in the policy development process, preceding the amendments to the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013 (VMR) in respect of Great Britain. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) holds the protection of animal health and welfare as one of its key objectives, alongside protecting human health and the environment. The amendments were proposed and drafted with constant consideration given to animal welfare and have now been made by the Veterinary Medicines (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2024 (S.I. 2024/567).

The VMD thanks the committee for their engagement and discussion on the amendments, with particular regard to new requirements for use of antibiotics in animals, updated requirements for medicated feedingstuffs and the authorisation, marketing and prescription of veterinary medicines.

This memorandum responds to the two recommendations set out in the committee's assessment.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to support their implementation of the changes and compliance with the VMR where needed, by providing additional guidance and advice.

We will also continue to monitor the impacts from the policy changes to ensure that they achieve the intended objectives in order to protect animal health, human health and the environment.

Recommendation 1: Regarding Schedule 4, paragraph 9A, relating to encouraging or facilitating misuse of the cascade and farm assurance schemes.

This requirement will not prevent use of the cascade, nor will it prevent a vet discussing animal treatment options with clients. The intention of this requirement is to ensure that unauthorised veterinary medicines (that is, products which do not hold a UK marketing authorisation) are not promoted as direct alternatives to authorised veterinary medicines.

This means that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and other treatment options, can still be prescribed and used in accordance with the cascade as set out in schedule 4 to the VMR.

To ensure this is clear, and in response to the public consultation we held regarding proposed changes, we amended schedule 4, paragraph 9A to state "promote" instead of "encourage".

We will engage with stakeholders who set farm assurance scheme standards to ensure that these standards are compliant with the VMR, whilst ensuring animal

welfare is protected. We will include the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway Team within Defra, and any other relevant areas of government to ensure assurance schemes continue to work.

We will also publish guidance on GOV.UK to clarify what may be considered promotion or facilitation of non-compliant use of the cascade.

Recommendation 2: Regarding Regulation 11, relating to the restrictions on the advertising of prescription only medicines.

There is no intention to amend regulation 11 in regard to which audiences' companies can aim advertising of authorised veterinary medicines available on prescription to.

Educational information aimed at giving a balanced overview of a disease and all available treatments may be made available to suitably qualified persons, farmers, or the general public as long as:

- products or brand names of prescription medicines are not mentioned
- all other advertising restrictions are met

Information on currently authorised veterinary medicines is available on the VMD's [product information database](#), available on GOV.UK. This includes product information such as the summary of product characteristics and labelling and package leaflet text, which states the indication and animal species for which the medicine is authorised.

We will clarify our guidance and work with stakeholders to ensure that educational material continues to be available for the professional development of prescribers.

E03173261

978-1-5286-5116-5