Veterinary Medicines Directorate

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

2024/25 Summary Report

Full report available at:
Veterinary Medicines Directorate Annual Report and Accounts 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK

Foreword by Our Chief Executive

"A mini-powerhouse within government, the VMD continues to operate as a lean, efficient, and high-performing organisation."

Abigail Seager, Chief Executive

As I reflect on the past year, I am proud of the remarkable delivery across all areas of the VMD's remit. The progress we have made is a clear reflection of our core values—collaboration, respect, pragmatism, robustness, innovation, and excellence—and of the unwavering commitment and professionalism of my VMD colleagues.

A mini-powerhouse within government, the VMD continues to operate as a lean, efficient, and high-performing organisation. We embrace continuous improvement and innovation, and despite an increasingly complex and, at times, ambiguous environment, we have responded with agility and focus. I'm pleased to highlight several key areas where we have delivered significant impact:

- Developed and implemented new Statutory Instruments covering the Veterinary Medicines Regulations and Residues Surveillance, including updated fees to ensure ongoing cost recovery.
- Proactively addressed emerging issues such as vaccine availability and exotic disease incursions.
- Responded effectively to two National Audit Office reports, focusing on AMR risk and disease resilience.
- Maintained a strong focus on regulatory compliance, taking action to tackle the illegal use of veterinary medicines.
- Secured a landmark United Nations political declaration committing to ambitious, action-oriented steps to combat antimicrobial resistance globally
- Published the UK's second National Action Plan on AMR, along with the annual VARSS report, which confirmed that UK antibiotic sales remain at low levels.
- Applied our scientific and technical expertise to support capacity-building efforts by international regulatory authorities.
- Embedded outcomes from our organisational design review, introducing incremental improvements that continue to strengthen the VMD as a great place to work.

Foreword by Our Chief Executive

Notably, an independent assessment of our scientific robustness awarded us the highest possible rating—an external validation of the quality and rigour that underpin all that we do.

Throughout the year, we remained steadfast in our commitment to the VMD's vision and mission. Looking ahead, we remain focused on delivering the Government's objectives, upholding the highest standards of animal health and welfare, and ensuring our continued contribution on the global stage.

Thank you to all my VMD colleagues and the Non-Executive Directors for your hard work and passion.

Abigail Seager, Chief Executive

Statement by Chair of the Management Board

Alison J White, Chair of the Management Board

"For a small organisation, VMD is home to a wealth of specialist expertise, which once again has been called on to advise across a range of issues, including the ongoing challenges of zoonotic diseases; supply chain resilience; cross-border trade with EU countries, and updating the legislative framework regarding residues"

The past year has been another challenging one for VMD, and I am proud of the way in which the whole team has worked together to drive improvements in critical work to support the security of the human food chain. A change of government always creates opportunities to challenge and re-evaluate our way of doing things and to focus on the multiplicity of ways in which the VMD's work supports the growth agenda and the drive to net zero.

I was particularly pleased to see the achievements made in slowing the development and spread of anti-microbial resistance, whilst recognising the scale of the increasing challenge, which is set out in the new National Action Plan, published in May 2024. For a small organisation, VMD is home to a wealth of specialist expertise, which once again has been called on to advise across a range of issues, including the ongoing challenges of zoonotic diseases; supply chain resilience; cross-border trade with EU countries, and updating the legislative framework regarding residues.

This busy schedule has once again stretched the team's resources, and it is to their credit that such good performance has been achieved in the planned work programme. I would like to record my personal thanks to the executive and staff for their hard work and professionalism.

Following my review of governance last year, and despite a hiatus in recruitment, the Board has become more involved in supporting the organisation strategically, though more is planned in the year ahead. I would like to thank my Board colleagues for their support and wise advice, which will be needed even more in the year ahead as we help VMD to navigate the objectives set out by the Government-we look forward to providing support and challenge to our executive colleagues to optimise their performance in the coming year.

Alison J White, Chair of the Management Board

About the VMD

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the UK Competent Authority for veterinary medicines regulation. Our objective is to ensure maximum availability of safe and effective medicines for prevention and treatment of diseases and improved welfare in all animal species. We also ensure that medicines pose the minimum possible risk to human health and the environment.

Our Mission
To protect public health, animal health, the environment and promote animal welfare by assuring the safety, quality, and efficacy of veterinary medicines.

Our Vision
To be globally recognised for excellence in regulation, for driving ahead standards and for our expertise in veterinary medicines.

What We Do

We are the regulatory and policy lead body responsible for issues concerning the authorisation, manufacture, supply, and use of veterinary medicines in the UK.

Our goal is to protect public and animal health and the environment, and to promote animal welfare by assuring the safety, quality and effectiveness of veterinary medicines.

Our Relationship With Defra

The Defra strategy sets out a shared vision and a set of strategic objectives for the Defra group. It provides a clear vision, direction and shared framework of improving and protecting our environment by making our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Actions to achieve the strategic objectives are described in more detail in Defra's Outcome Delivery Plan. Defra and VMD share the objective to protect public health and meet high standards of animal welfare.

We operate within an overall policy and financial framework determined by the Secretary of State for Defra, through the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity. More information on our governance is set out in our Framework Document.

Our Values

We work in accordance with our values with the aim to foster a cohesive culture, improve decision-making, and enhance stakeholder trust.

Our Responsibilities

Making, updating and enforcing the Veterinary Medicines Regulations

Assessing applications for and granting marketing authorisations to enable companies to sell their veterinary medicine

Regulating how veterinary medicines are manufactured and distributed

Monitoring and acting on reports of adverse events from veterinary medicines.

Testing for residues of veterinary medicines or illegal substances in animals and animal products.

Our Responsibilities

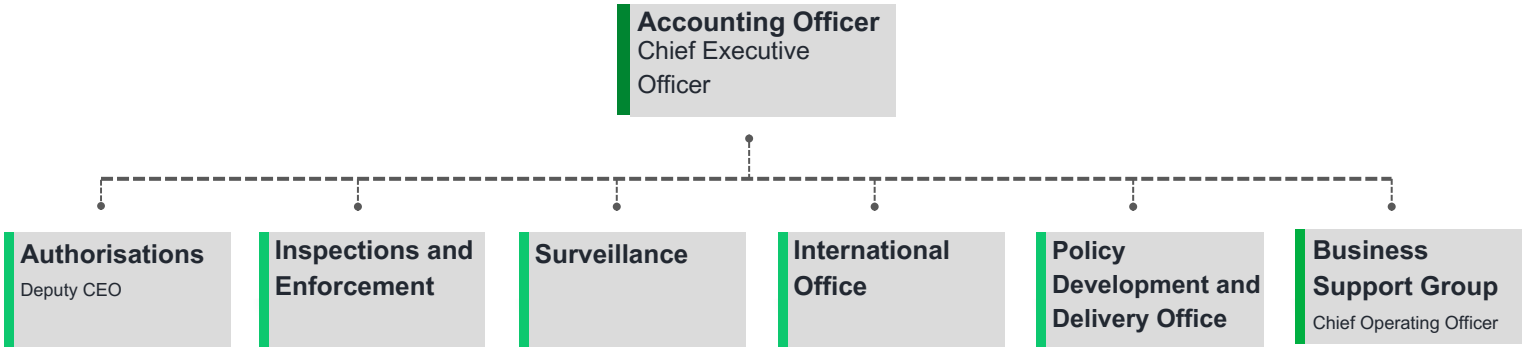
We collaborate closely with veterinary professionals, the livestock industry and other public and private sector stakeholders to implement the UK Government's 20-year vision for antimicrobial resistance. We led on the veterinary side of the first 5-year national action plan (Tackling antimicrobial resistance 2019 to 2024) and have been leading in developing and implementing the next 5-year action plan (Confronting antimicrobial resistance 2024 to 2029).

We also leverage international collaboration opportunities in the post-EU landscape to advance global regulations and joint applications and have an active programme of supporting low and middle-income countries improve their regulation of veterinary medicines.

More details on our aims and responsibilities and information about our operating structure and governance are available on GOV.UK.

Our Organisational Structure

We are structured into four groups and two offices, each led by a member of the Executive Management Board (EMB).



In February, the CEO created a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to support the EMB. The SLT is responsible for effectively implementing transformational change, fostering an inclusive culture, supporting integrated and efficient working to deliver VMD business optimally.

Performance Overview

The world that VMD operates in is fast-changing, especially regarding the multiple animal disease threats which once were unknown in the UK, and now require urgent action to bring new products to market which help to safeguard not only animal health, but also human health and the food chain. Despite continuing challenges of resourcing, both in staff and technology, VMD's professional and committed team continued to deliver not only vital regulatory functions but also to provide expert intervention and facilitation to underpin and support the Government's Growth strategy in such areas as supply chain resilience and cross border trade.

We substantially delivered our core regulatory services against published standards.

We continued to successfully contribute to the animal health-specific aspects of the cross-government 20-year AMR vision and 5-year action plan. The first five-year National Action Plan for antimicrobial resistance, 'Tackling antimicrobial resistance 2019 to 2024,' led to significant and positive action toward reducing the negative impact of AMR in the UK and globally. In 2024, we commenced the next 5-year National Action Plan, 'Confronting antimicrobial resistance 2024-2029', which builds on the achievements and lessons of the first. It includes outcomes and commitments that will make progress towards the 20-year vision for AMR to be contained, controlled and mitigated.

During the year, we laid and published the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR) that set out the controls on the authorisation, manufacture, supply, possession, and administration of veterinary medicines and medicated feed. These controls are required to ensure the protection of animal health, public health, and the environment. The VMR also sets out the statutory fees associated with various regulatory services the VMD provides. The statutory fees and fee structure became effective on 17 May 2024.

Our Year in Numbers

Assessed

2,824

National Applications

6,753

Other Applications

Inspected

780

Manufacturers, wholesale dealers and retailers of veterinary medicines

129

Manufacturers and distributors of medicated animal feeds

Removed

>600

Online marketplace listings for breaching the VMR

Seized

>18,000

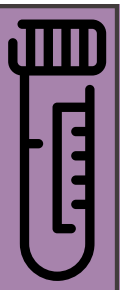
illegal animal medicines

Delivered 3

national training events for vet med wholsalers

Delivered 3 e-learning courses to 152 learners across 12 regulatory authorities

Tested



30,845

Residue samples

Assessed

3,794

Applications for Import, Export and Batch Release Schemes

Processed

5,395

Adverse events reports and PSURs

Objectives and key performance indicators	Progress
 **1. Our people** To ensure we maintain a well-trained, motivated and content workforce that nurtures our diversity. **KPI:** Increase our Civil Service People Survey engagement score percentage from prior year	**Met:** A sustained focus on our people and managing the continual pressures from a challenging year meant that we still managed a 1% increase in the Civil Service People Survey engagement score to 64%.
 **2. Policy making and delivery** To ensure that the legislation underpinning our work and the GB and NI regulatory frameworks remains effective and fit for purpose. **KPI:** To participate in negotiations with the Commission and meet key milestones as determined by the Commission	**Met:** The amendments to the Veterinary Medicines Regulations in GB came into force on the 17 May 2024 and were implemented effectively. In relation to Northern Ireland, we have continued to meet the 3 monthly reporting cycle for veterinary medicines at risk of discontinuation in Northern Ireland.
 **3. Regulatory Service** To deliver core regulatory services with overall performance against published standards at or above the effective level. **KPI:** Achieve above effective target	**Partially Met**: There were 37 measures defined within our published standards, and we achieved above the effective target on 31 measures. 28 were rated excellent, 3 effective and 6 ineffective. The Performance Analysis section provides further detail.
 **4. Global influence and recognition** To support the capacity strengthening efforts of other international regulatory authorities. **KPI:** Complete deliverables as agreed with our funders	**Substantially met:** We successfully completed the deliverables agreed with our funders. The key highlights of these activities are detailed in the Performance Analysis section.
 **5. Business compliance** a) To maintain full cost recovery for regulatory services. b) To maintain business certification against ISO 9001 and ISO 27001.	a) **Substantially Met:** We achieved 98% cost recovery for regulatory services. b) **Met:** ISO certification for both ISO 9001 and 27001 was maintained.

Outcome Key
· Met: 100%
· Substantially met: between 95% and 99%
· Partially met: between 75% and 94%
· Not met: less than 75%

The Year Ahead

In the year ahead, we will build on the progress and lessons of the past year, with a continued focus on improving the availability and regulation of veterinary medicines across the UK.

For the Authorisation Group, sustaining the improved timeliness in issuing authorisations and validations will remain a key priority. We will work to maintain improved performance and support common labelling to ensure our approach to parallel GB and EU procedures supports medicine availability and regulatory clarity in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Our research and development programme will further prioritise critical areas including AMR, AR, and pharmaceutical in the environment. We will initiate new projects in the use of Artificial Intelligence and environmental impacts of climate change. We will support new studies, develop regulatory tools, and provide evidence to inform policy and protect public and animal health.

The Inspection and Enforcement Group will expand inspection capacity with newly trained staff and increase efforts to tackle the illegal supply of medicines. Our enforcement team will maintain efforts to disrupt the illegal medicines trade, while refining intelligence-sharing mechanisms and supporting anonymous reporting to protect the integrity of the veterinary supply chain. We will also enhance our stakeholder engagement and feedback processes.

Surveillance activities will grow with expanded AMR monitoring across more livestock species and better use of clinical data. We will continue to publish robust data through our annual reporting and contribute to international AMR initiatives. Residues monitoring will remain a key area, with high levels of compliance and increased collaboration on trade-related food safety assessments.

The Year Ahead

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On policy development and delivery, we will maintain UK-wide consistency through effective coordination under the Windsor Framework. We will continue to work with stakeholders to resolve issues around Northern Ireland supply continuity and maintain strong intergovernmental relations.

Internationally, we will strengthen global partnerships by expanding antimicrobial resistance research with the University of Zambia and supporting the University of Pretoria in launching a pioneering postgraduate.

We will deliver further e-learning courses and training events and respond to demand for pharmacovigilance capacity-building through a regional training session. Our tools and research will be shared through peer-reviewed publications, and we will support new residues surveillance initiatives in West and Southern Africa.

Across all areas, we remain committed to continuous improvement, scientific excellence, and stakeholder collaboration, ensuring the UK veterinary regulatory system remains robust, responsive, and ready for future challenges.

Abigail Seager, Chief Executive
27 June 2025