BULLETIN UPDATE #2

Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE) Group Meeting

Thursday 05 October 09:30-11:30 via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Present:

Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) – Chair
Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) – Secretariat
Environment Agency (EA)
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Welsh Government (WG)/Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Northern Ireland Environment Agency/Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NIEA/DAERA)
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees and noted apologies. The Chair introduced JNCC as a new member to the PiE Group.

ACTION POINTS 1 & 2

2. Actions from July 2023 PiE meeting

The PiE Group (the "Group") reviewed the actions from the last meeting.

3. Next steps: Fipronil and imidacloprid in UK surface waters

a. Review evidence

The Group reviewed the evidence, data and information gaps that would be useful to help inform the Group's future strategy regarding fipronil and imidacloprid.

The VMD highlighted that building an evidence base to inform responsible use of these products and the development of an exposure model to inform the environmental risk assessment is a priority evidence gap. It was noted that industry have developed exposure models, but having an agreed standard model is important in terms of providing standardised outputs that can be interpreted and compared universally. Whilst agreeing an exposure model at international level would be a long process, there would be merit in developing a model to provide estimates for exposure or utilising an existing model. However, an initial focus should be the quality of the data/evidence that would input into the model. It was noted that these areas would require broader engagement from industry and veterinary associations to inform and take forward.

Representatives from the environment agencies (NRW, SEPA and NIEA) provided an overview of the technological monitoring capabilities. It was noted that the technological capabilities of these monitoring programmes allow SEPA and NIEA to build databases for horizon scanning across their respective databases to identify emerging risks and substances of concern, with the ability to retrospectively identify previously unknown substances.

ACTION POINT 3

It was highlighted that formulating the questions and evidence need is required for agencies to determine whether their databases have sufficient data to inform these evidence gaps. It was concluded that the Group could help to formulate questions to address the problem and by gathering appropriate information and data inform any regulatory actions.

The challenges relating to interpreting data from various monitoring schemes from different regulatory regimes was also discussed. It was concluded that the Group could explore a more harmonised approach across regulatory regimes.

b. HSE: lessons learnt from the initiatives for minimising pesticide use

A HSE representative presented an overview of the experiences and lessons learnt from HSE initiatives for minimising pesticide use.

ACTION POINT 4

There were several examples from pesticide use minimisation that could be translated to VMPs, for example the approach to inform, educate and reduce the use either voluntarily or through better governance could be applied to VMPs. The success of voluntary approaches and financial incentives was acknowledged from an agricultural perspective, for example utilising Farm Assurance Schemes to minimise pesticide use. There could be some parallels in this approach for VMPs, however there will likely be challenges relating to minimising home use. However, similar voluntary approaches in terms of education around responsible use and raising awareness have been successful in the past (e.g. pesticides, antimicrobials and anthelmintics) and could be applied to products containing fipronil and imidacloprid.

c. Develop priority activities

There was discussion around conceptual models and process mapping to understand current data, evidence and information and regulatory and non-regulatory tools available to inform future activities and strategy for the issue of fipronil and imidacloprid. The next stage would involve stakeholder engagement to identify opportunities to fill evidence gaps, followed by a road map to allocate ownership of activities (government or industry led). It was agreed that the next steps would be for the Group to convene at an in-person workshop for a process mapping exercise.

4. Other priorities

The process mapping exercise will help to inform future strategy for other substances of concern.

5. AOB

The Chair raised the potential to invite academia to a future meeting to provide a short presentation to the Group. The Group agreed to invite academia as guest speakers to provide short topical presentations at meetings in the future.

ACTION POINT 5

The Group agreed to a meeting frequency of every two months (bi-monthly). Ideally, the next meeting will be the in-person workshop depending on availability at the end November/start December 2023.

ACTION POINT 6

Date of next meeting (circa End November/Start December 2023)