

BULLETIN UPDATE #3

Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE) Group Meeting

Wednesday 22 May 10:00-12:00 – MS Teams

Present:

Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) – Chair
Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) – Secretariat
Environment Agency (EA)
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
NHS Highland
Northern Ireland Environment Agency/Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NIEA/DAERA)
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
Welsh Government (WG)

Internal workshop (31 January 2024):

On the 31 January 2024 the cross-government PiE Group held an internal in-person workshop to define and agree the primary sources of fipronil and imidacloprid and pathways to the environment to develop systems process map. The systems process map enabled visualisation of the evidence gaps and potential points of intervention to work towards reducing the levels in UK surface waters. Based on the current evidence, the Group recognised that the use of certain veterinary medicinal products (VMPs) can contribute to levels of fipronil and imidacloprid in the environment, and that surface water is a primary pathway of exposure for VMPs. It was agreed that there are other potential sources, and this is a major evidence gap. The Group considered several workstreams as part of road map of activities to work towards reducing these levels.

1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies.

2. Review and agree road map of activities to address the issue of fipronil and imidacloprid in UK surface waters

The Group discussed the draft road map of activities and agreed further amendments were required to refine the document before sharing more widely.

3. Report on progress to date (road map activities)

a. Education/communication workstream

The roadmap has helped to identify stakeholders to engage with prior to a larger stakeholder engagement session. A PiE subgroup has initiated satellite meetings with key stakeholders to introduce the roadmap and the proposal for industry-led stewardship.

Overall the satellite meetings resulted in positive discussions, and it was agreed that a stewardship initiative will require a cohesive voice across stakeholders and recognition of collective responsibility. The Chair indicated there will be further discussions with these stakeholders as well as discussions with additional stakeholder groups.

There was some discussion regarding the current regulatory landscape with reference to managing expectations around the pace at which work can be progressed. Whilst it is possible to change the legislation, any legislative change would need to ensure a harmonious approach and would require international agreement which will take some time.

BULLETIN UPDATE #3

There was general agreement that a first practical step for messaging could be to raise awareness of user guidelines to help reduce exposure to the environment. It was noted that changing the labelling in GB and diverging from EU/NI would be challenging due to potential consequences for NI medicines availability.

The Group acknowledged that any regulatory drivers would require international agreement and is therefore a long-term action to help reduce the levels of fipronil and imidacloprid. There was agreement to focus on communication/education strategies (i.e. voluntary stewardship) for immediate action.

b. Evidence/data/information workstream

There was some discussion around measuring the impact of the voluntary stewardship and the optimal approach to achieve impact.

The EA shared summary data from their monitoring system. There are differences in the method of assessment across the four environment agencies. Therefore, further work is required to understand these data across the agencies and to develop a true baseline for current levels of fipronil and imidacloprid. It was agreed to form a subgroup to collate the monitoring data to develop an agreed baseline.

The VMD and HSE are exploring mechanisms to obtain sales data for companion animal parasiticide products.

4. Other priorities

- Establish a subgroup to harmonise monitoring data across the four environmental agencies, with the initial priority to develop a harmonised statement for the baseline levels for imidacloprid and fipronil.
- Continue satellite meetings with stakeholder groups.
- Agree PiE Group position and messaging on the issue of fipronil and imidacloprid to take to stakeholders.
- Wider communication session with stakeholders.
- Agree industry messaging and determine effectiveness of communication methods.

There is also continued stakeholder challenge to provide more detailed disposal advice and this was noted as a topic that requires multi-agency collaboration as a future PiE priority.

5. AOB

- Two Group members are supporting a MSc social science project to investigate attitudes towards parasiticide use in pets via a questionnaire study. This project came out of a similar project on AMR (link [here](#)).
- An EA representative raised that they have regular informal meetings with academia focusing on key issues related to VMPs and the outputs could be shared with the Group. The Chair suggested that it might be useful to host a symposium in the future on current research in this area to translate findings into a policy/regulatory context.
- Pharma Pollution Hub is an Exeter University initiative to develop a roadmap for human medicines and aquatic pollution.

6. Date of next meeting: July 2024