

Pharmaceuticals in the Environment (PiE) Group Meeting

Wednesday 20 November 2024 10:00-12:00 – MS Teams

Present:

Veterinary Products Committee (VMD) – Chair
Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) – Secretariat
Environment Agency (EA)
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)
Austrian Medicines and Medical Devices Agency – Observer

1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies. A representative from the Austrian Medicines and Medical Devices Agency was welcomed to the Group as an observer.

2. Review actions from the July 2024 PiE Group meeting

The Group discussed the actions from the July 2024 meeting.

Matters arising:

- (i) The EA highlighted that it will be challenging to harmonise standards across the four environment agencies until agreement is reached on an Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) value. The challenges around achieving targets once an EQS is developed were also acknowledged.
- (ii) The EA highlighted that pharmaceutical and veterinary medicines data are available on the UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) Chemicals Investigation Programme (CIP3) website. There is an opportunity in the next CIP to provide improved methods of treatment for fipronil and imidacloprid; however, this would be a long-term approach.

3. Roadmap

The Group discussed potential progress measures for stewardship activities to inform future regulatory actions, highlighting the need for interim metrics beyond environmental monitoring.

The development of new collaborative frameworks to address substances of concern was highlighted as a key positive outcome of these meetings. Additionally, significant progress has been made in raising the issue's profile both nationally and internationally, as well as building consensus on strategies to address it.

It was agreed that the internal roadmap provides a framework approach that could be summarised to inform the Group's future strategy for other pharmaceuticals of concern.

The Group also discussed surveillance opportunities to identify emerging risks, including using existing pharmacovigilance systems to promote adverse environmental event reporting. NHS Highland highlighted the work of the One Health Breakthrough Partnership regarding eco-directed prescribing, and it was agreed to discuss this further at a future meeting.

The VMD shared the proposed public-facing roadmap with the Group for discussion. It was agreed for the Group to review and provide feedback on the public-facing roadmap via email correspondence.

BULLETIN UPDATE #5

4. Update from monitoring subgroup (EA, SEPA, NRW, NIEA)

The EA informed the Group that they continue to monitor for fipronil, imidacloprid and isoxazolines and agreed to share summaries of these data with the Group.

NIEA anticipates that increased monitoring for fipronil and imidacloprid will take place in 2025.

SEPA will be reporting 2024 monitoring data in early 2025 and intend to make available data on a quarterly basis in the future.

NRW anticipate that fipronil and imidacloprid will be included in their regular monitoring across 70 sites in Wales in 2025.

It was agreed that the objective relating to the four environment agencies developing a baseline for current levels of fipronil and imidacloprid in UK surface water required revisions due to the challenges around harmonisation of data across their different monitoring programmes. It was concluded that standardised reporting of trends from the devolved administrations could provide a more pragmatic approach to harmonisation across the environment agencies and would allow comparison in the future. It was agreed to revise the roadmap to reflect these discussions.

5. Update on satellite meetings (VMD)

The VMD updated the Group on the stakeholder satellite meetings to date and noted that further satellite meetings are required before the end of the financial year. The plans for a wider stakeholder workshop to initiate stakeholder-led stewardship are being introduced in these satellite meetings; overall there have been positive responses from stakeholders to date.

6. Planning the wider stakeholder engagement session (external workshop)

It was agreed that the workshop would be an opportunity to promote a joined-up approach to developing responsible use messages and to ensure messaging disseminated by different stakeholder groups are aligned to facilitate stewardship efforts.

The VMD indicated that responsible use messaging has been drafted as a reference document to help the Group prepare and facilitate productive discussions at the workshop. The content in the draft messaging is based on information in the product literature.

The Group agreed a provisional timeline for the workshop (first quarter of financial year 2025/26).

7. Update on disposal advice for veterinary medicines

The VMD has drafted more detailed disposal advice for veterinary medicines based on currently available guidance. It was agreed for the VMD to share the draft disposal advice with the four environment agencies for feedback and agreement. A longer-term project is also in development to improve disposal practices.

8. AOB

- VICH update (VMD)
- PiE Group membership information to be shared with key stakeholders (VMD)
- Representatives at the PiE Group February 2025 meeting
 - Pharmaceutical Pollution Hub will present an overview of their work at the next meeting.
- PiE Group representatives at the policy meeting at the House of Lords

BULLETIN UPDATE #5

- PiE representatives will be attending the policy meeting in the House of Lords.
- How/when the PiE Group will take forward the human side of pharmaceutical pollution and requirements to be a member of the group
 - The Group agreed further discussion regarding governance requirements for taking forward issues related to human medicines in the environment is required offline.

A recent publication on environmentally informed prescribing was shared with the Group.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.176929>

NRW highlighted a PhD position related to environmental pollution and agreed to circulate further information via email.

Date of next meeting: February 2025