Veterinary Products Committee

PUBLISHED MINUTES

A summary of the minutes of the Veterinary Products Committee Meeting held on 12 June 2025 at the VMD, Woodham Lane, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey.

Chair – Helen Ballantyne
Secretary – Chris Abbott

Members
Dr D Bartley
Dr R Bennett
Dr M Bowen
Mr B Buckle
Dr Y Chang
Prof M Clark
Prof K Ganapathy
Mr M Jelley
Mrs F Kidd
Prof D Killick
Dr D Mackay
Mr R Soutar
Prof J Statham
Ms A Tarr
Mr E Vega
Prof J Weeks
Mr M White

Officials: may be present for all or part of the meeting or for specific agenda items.

VMD
Mr G Hall
Dr B Berrocal-Gonzalez
Dr G Paiba
Dr R Cooney
Dr G Clarke
Dr K Gray
Mr A Rush
Mr L Reynolds
Dr C Stratford
Ms C Govindasamy

Published minutes

1. Announcements and apologies for absence

2. Declaration of interests

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025

4. Matters arising from the minutes
   4.1. Update on AN: 01548/2024
   4.2. VMD responses to VPC evaluation of assessments

5. Presentation by Professor Kate White: sustainability in veterinary medicine prescribing and use

6. UK Pharmacovigilance Report for December to March 2025

7. Written Appeal for a product

8. Consideration of an application: ref no. 03069/2024

9. Special Imports

10. Defra Evidence Committee Chairs meeting

11. Residues surveillance programmes

12. Vaccine availability

13. Legislation update

14. Horizon scanning

15. Items for information

16. Any other business

17. Date of next meeting

Published minutes

1. **Announcements and apologies for absence**

1.1. The Chair reminded Members and officials that all papers, unless otherwise indicated, and discussions of the Committee are confidential. No information relating to the proceedings of the Committee or papers presented to the Committee may be divulged to any third party.

1.2. There were no apologies.

2. **Declaration of interests**

2.1. The Chair reminded Members of the procedure for declaring interests at VPC meetings. Interests declared were minuted under the individual items.

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025**

3.1. The Committee had cleared the minutes of the February meeting by correspondence and the Summary minutes were available on the VPC website (Veterinary Products Committee - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)).

4. **Matters arising from the minutes**

4.1. **Minute 5A.4.9: AN: 01548/2024**

4.1.1 VMD gave an update on an application considered at the last meeting.

4.2. **Minute 8.1: VMD responses to VPC evaluation of assessments**

4.2.1 VMD had provided written responses to comments made by Members during their evaluation of VMD assessments. VMD agreed to provide a presentation on the aims and requirements of SPCs at the next meeting.

5. **Presentation by Professor Kate White: sustainability in veterinary medicine prescribing and use**

5.1. Kate White, Professor in Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia at the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham, joined the meeting to talk about ways of reducing the environmental effects of veterinary medicines. This is a matter of global concern as healthcare emissions are the world's 5th biggest carbon emitter. Life cycle assessments are used to analyse the environmental effects of individual medicines. They show that activities which contribute to their carbon footprint include production, their transport across countries, use by veterinary practitioners and disposal. Approaches to tackling this range from simple steps involving behaviour change, such as reducing wastage by using products in a more efficient way, to complex technical solutions. For anaesthetics in particular, an issue of concern is carrier gas and flow and its contribution to greenhouse gases. An ambition is to develop new technology to recapture volatile anaesthetic gases from animals during surgery. Other general actions include more education for veterinary surgeons and practices, the availability of free to use carbon calculators, better use of the cascade to alleviate environmental concerns and sustainability approvals. More research in the area is urgently needed.

5.2. In response to a question about the data which is available, Professor White said that there was a dearth of information and useful models and the pharmaceuticals industry needs to be more involved. Scope 3 emissions are not routinely reported. In regard to changing behaviours by users, vets already have demanding workloads but small changes, such as using fewer products, will make a difference. A challenge is identifying which treatments can be avoided while balancing what is best for the patient against what is best for the environment. It was suggested that VMD could include questions about carbon emissions in their assessments of new products and that introducing requirements for carbon use information in packaging could help users make informed choices. VMD noted that medicines manufacturing is now a global operation and decentralising manufacture to have

more local manufacturing sites may have the unintended consequences of increasing adverse effects on the environment rather than impacting via air miles. Industry would need to lead on some manufacturing improvements, such as moving away from the production of single use plastics, although it was noted that recycled plastics potentially have more contaminants.

5.3. Professor White concluded by noting that people involved in animal healthcare care about these issues and there is big potential for change.

6. The UK Pharmacovigilance report

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1 The Committee considered and commented upon the Pharmacovigilance Report for December to March 2025, which was presented by the deputy head of the VMD's Pharmacovigilance Team.

6.1.2 A report of the Alert Group/Signal Detection meetings held in May was presented and the most notable signals explained.

6.1.3 Future Urgent Safety publications in Gov.UK and planned deep dives in selected products from the alert list were announced. The team stated that they are happy to receive requests to look into products from VPC.

6.1.4 Needlestick injuries remain an area of concern. There have been several reports of exposure to products based on anti-Nerve Growth Factors in young female vet nurses and vets, who may or may not have been pregnant at the time of exposure. The VMD has discussed possible improvements with the RCVS, such as clearer warnings and the veterinary profession taking steps to ensure vulnerable workers are not exposed to risks.

6.1.5 Feedback was requested relating to the new report presenting signals detected and received and associated regulatory action (aligned with new VMR 2013 pharmacovigilance activities that focus on continuous monitoring and receiving timely reporting from industry). Members appreciated the new format and the focus provided but would still like to see all the signal detection cases received. VMD would take this under consideration before the next meeting.

6.2. Suspected adverse event reports in humans

6.2.1 A Member raised questions about two reports and confirmation that further action was not necessary was given. One of the cases involved a GP self-prescribing himself veterinary medicinal products. That is allowed under specific conditions and regulated by GMC.

6.2.2 Another case had resulted in injury after opening a vial. The team confirmed they had checked if further cases were reported. There was only one case and assurance had been received from the MAH that they are investigating. If further cases are received, the company will be asked to present a Product Defect report and disclose details of the investigation and proposed CAPA.

6.3. Suspected adverse event reports in animals

6.3.1 Explanations were provided relating to the report presented (based on signals and regulatory outcome) and confirmation of availability of the previous format of report.

7. Written Appeal for a product

7.1. The Committee reviewed written evidence from a MA holder against the VMD's decision to suspend their product.

7.2. No interests were declared.

7.3. The Committee gave its recommendation to the VMD.

8. **Consideration of an application: ref no. 03069/2024**

8.1. The Committee examined evidence relating to an application for a variation to change the legal distribution category for a product.

8.2. No interests were declared.

8.3. The Committee provided advice for consideration by the VMD.

9. **Special Imports**

9.1. There were no comments on the reports.

10. **Defra Evidence Committee Chairs meeting**

10.1. The Chair gave a report on the Defra Evidence Committee Chairs meeting she had attended in February. There is some overlap between the different committees and there is scope for collaboration but it was acknowledged that this will be difficult to achieve in practice. A forum has been created to enable cross communication between committees. The VPC is a statutory committee with a clear remit and some of the other committees have a looser structure and approach. Self-evaluation is useful to identify any deficiencies in committees and to check they are fulfilling their purpose. Other topics discussed included CPD for members and better communication with the public e.g. through newsletters. It was noted that a lot of news and ideas are disseminated through social media now and committees need to find ways to keep up with this. The VPC has historically been more reactive in its approach and a better appreciation for the social sciences would help. Members commented that they feel listened to by the VMD and are confident in their relationship with it.

11. **Residues surveillance programmes**

11.1. This item was postponed until the next meeting.

12. **Vaccine availability**

12.1. The VMD reported that it continues to engage with stakeholders regarding concerns over veterinary vaccine availability. The VMD convened a roundtable discussion with interested parties from across the animal health sector in February to better understand the concerns and potential solutions. They have also surveyed Marketing Authorisation Holders of UK authorised vaccines to understand the extent and causality of any recent supply issues. These activities have highlighted the complex multifactorial nature of the problem and the need to champion a collaborative, cross-sector approach moving forwards. The intention is to publish a statement of intent outlining a strategic framework for such an approach in the near future.

12.2. There are some antigen banks in the UK otherwise it is up to Industry to manufacture vaccines on demand. Other alternatives used to fill gaps in the market include the special import of products, expedited batch release and permitting use of autogenous vaccines in certain circumstances. VMD confirmed that batch releases can be approved quickly and are prioritised depending on their urgency. It also currently provides free scientific advice to companies looking to develop new products.

12.3. Members noted concerns over the efficacy of some products in the face of changing viral strains and that ‘product outages’, both planned and unplanned, are becoming more serious. The use of inactivated autogenous vaccines is becoming more common globally but there are risks around unintended consequences of their use due to their limited amount of safety and efficacy data.

12.4. The NAO has recently published a review into Defra's resilience to animal diseases which found that although there is a good understanding of what disease threats there are, there is a lack of preparedness, resources and contingencies in place.

13. Legislation update

13.1. The UK's recent medicines agreement with the EU (SPS) does not include veterinary medicines but will likely include MRLs. The grace period for manufacturers to implement the legislative requirements for Northern Ireland expires at the end of the year and there is a risk of some products being discontinued, some of which are critical for animal welfare. Mitigations are being discussed to minimise negative impacts to animal health and welfare. The Statutory instrument for NI will need to be updated.

13.2. VMD confirmed it has commented on the Competition and Markets Authority's remedies paper on improving veterinary services for household pets. The picture is complex and the CMA deadline for producing the final report has been extended until February 2026 with an interim report due in September.

14. Horizon scanning: issues for consideration

14.1. A Member raised the issue of medicinal claims being made for unauthorised pet foods. Across different animal sectors companies push the boundaries in regard to the claims made for their products. Animal feeds for food producing animals require authorisation and are closely regulated on a European and national level. VMD noted that their Enforcement team deals with any breaches of the regulations and investigate any borderline products which may be making medicinal claims. Concerns about any products can be reported to the VMD and anonymous reporting is available.

14.2. Professor Weeks proposed that a new approach is taken to horizon scanning by the Committee similar to what he has experienced in other committees. This would involve developing an approach to topics which weighs their information in a more structured way. He will present a proposal at the next meeting.

15. Items for information

15.1. The following items for information are publicly available:

15.1.1 The Veterinary Medicines Directorate Product Information Database (http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/).

15.2. The following items for information are not publicly available:

15.2.1 Report to the VPC on new MA applications granted.

15.2.2 Report from the Scientific Secretariat and the Biological Committee.

15.2.3 Report to the VPC on new ATC applications.

15.2.4 Report to the VPC on applications considered by correspondence.

16. Any other business

16.1. Antibiotics for calves

16.1.1 A Member reported a worrying 21% rise in sales of antibiotics for calves in the last three years. This seems to have been caused by the prescription of antibiotics by consultant vets rather than practice vets familiar to farmers. This makes them easier to obtain and less subject to recording and audit. Other Members reported similar issues in the pig and game sectors and that the number of local vets has decreased.

However, it was noted that the VMR are not being breached so no there is no scope for preventive action. VMD officials will raise with the AMR team.

16.2. **Bacteriophages**

16.2.1 The MHRA has published the UK's first official guidance to support the safe development and use of phage therapies (Helping bring phage medicines to UK patients – guidance for industry - GOV.UK). VMD noted that it continues to provide advice to companies seeking to develop veterinary phage products. Dr Mackay had recently authored an article on the subject of regulation of phages as veterinary medicines which would be circulated to Members.

17. **Date of next meeting**

17.1. The next meeting of the VPC will be on 23 October 2025 at the VMD, Woodham Lane, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey.