Veterinary Medicines Directorate

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

2025/26 Summary Report

Full report available at:
Veterinary Medicines Directorate Annual Report and Accounts 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

Foreword by Our Chief Executive

"Throughout the year, we have remained focused on our core purpose: protecting animal health and welfare, safeguarding public health, and minimising risks to the environment through proportionate, science-led regulation."

Abigail Seager, Chief Executive

I am pleased to present the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's Annual Report and Accounts for 2025–26.

This has been a complex and demanding year for the VMD, shaped by global animal disease pressures, antimicrobial resistance, and continued regulatory and operational change following the Windsor Framework. Throughout the year, we have remained focused on our core purpose: protecting animal health and welfare, safeguarding public health, and minimising risks to the environment through proportionate, science-led regulation.

Despite ongoing pressures on capacity and the constraints of legacy systems, the organisation delivered strongly against its statutory responsibilities. Performance improved across several key regulatory services, with a return to timeliness levels that meet published standards and stakeholder expectations.

We authorised new veterinary medicines and vaccines to support disease prevention, food security and market resilience, while maintaining the integrity and independence of regulatory decision-making.

Antimicrobial resistance remains a critical long-term risk. During the year, the VMD played a central role in delivering the veterinary component of the UK's AMR National Action Plan, supported by robust surveillance, evidence-led policy advice, and collaboration across government, industry and the veterinary profession. This One Health approach continues to underpin our work domestically and internationally.

A substantial focus this year was the end of the Northern Ireland grace period. Working closely with Defra, devolved administrations, industry and other regulators, we supported continued availability of veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland. No significant supply issues were identified, reflecting early engagement and coordinated delivery.

Foreword by Our Chief Executive

We also strengthened organisational resilience through targeted recruitment, investment in capability and training, clearer governance arrangements, and continued progress on digital modernisation and cyber resilience. While these programmes remain challenging, they are essential to sustaining effective regulation.

I would like to thank colleagues across the VMD for their professionalism and commitment, and our Board members for their support and challenge. Looking ahead, we remain focused on sustaining regulatory performance, supporting medicine availability, strengthening surveillance and evidence, and investing in our people and systems.

Abigail Seager, Chief Executive

Statement by Chair of the Management Board

Alison J White, Chair of the Management Board

"The Agency continues to play a vital role in protecting animal health, safeguarding public health, and supporting the effective functioning of the UK's food system."

The Agency continues to play a vital role in protecting animal health, safeguarding public health, and supporting the effective functioning of the UK's food system. Looking out into the wider world, one observes that the Agency is not immune from geo-political events, and that its work has had to be constantly shaped (and re-shaped) to address those challenges- I particularly note the focus that has been needed to contribute to the government's policies on trade; to the security of supply chains; to domestic regulatory reform; to support international capacity building, and to respond to emergent issues in regard to potential threats to the environment.

During the year, the organisation has maintained a strong focus on the responsible use of antimicrobials, contributing to the UK's wider efforts to address antimicrobial resistance. This remains a key priority, and the progress reported reflects ongoing collaboration with partners across government, industry, the veterinary profession and importantly, internationally.

A small increase in its professional and committed team, along with some progress on new technology, have helped to improve services for stakeholders, whilst maintaining the integrity of regulatory decision-making.

The Board has now been fully resourced, and I am pleased that this has enabled the much-needed separation of accountabilities between the Board, and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. This has strengthened the organisation's governance and enabled the Board to focus on a prioritised agenda, closely tailored to the challenges and risks that the Agency is facing, which enables appropriate professional advice to be given to our talented and committed executives.

I would like to thank all my colleagues for their hard work, and strong commitment to VMD- it is a pleasure to work with them.

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 Vision
To ensure the responsible, safe and effective use of veterinary medicines.

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 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.

RESPECT
Respect is at the core of all our interactions, we treat everyone with dignity and value diversity and expect to be treated in the same way

COLLABORATION
We are **collaborative** in our work, leveraging the collective expertise and creativity of our team and stakeholders

INNOVATION
We embrace change and continuously seek new ways to improve and **innovate**

PRAGMATISM
We approach challenges with a **pragmatic** mindset, focusing on solutions that are both effective and realistic

ROBUSTNESS
We make **robust** decisions based on rigorous evidence and develop processes that withstand challenge

EXCELLENCE
We strive for **excellence** in everything we do, continuously pushing the boundaries of what is possible

What we do

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is the UK's regulatory authority for veterinary medicines and an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

We regulate veterinary medicines to protect animal health and welfare, public health, and the environment, while supporting the effective functioning of the veterinary medicines market. Through our work, we contribute directly to Defra's Outcome Delivery Plan by enabling safe, sustainable food production, managing animal disease risk, and supporting a resilient and innovative agricultural and veterinary sector.

Our Responsibilities

Regulating veterinary medicines

Our core role is to ensure that veterinary medicines placed on the UK market meet appropriate standards of safety, quality and effectiveness, and that they are manufactured, supplied and used in accordance with the law.

We are responsible for:

- developing, maintaining and enforcing the Veterinary Medicines Regulations on behalf of the Secretary of State;
- assessing applications for, and granting, marketing authorisations for veterinary medicinal products in Great Britain, and supporting regulatory arrangements for Northern Ireland;
- regulating the manufacture, distribution and supply of veterinary medicines;
- monitoring and investigating adverse events and safety concerns through pharmacovigilance; and
- delivering statutory surveillance and residues testing programmes to protect food safety and consumer confidence

These activities support Defra's objectives on animal health, biosecurity and food standards by ensuring that veterinary medicines are regulated proportionately and, on a science-led basis.

Our Responsibilities

Enabling availability, innovation and market confidence

While remaining within our statutory remit, we support the availability of veterinary medicines by providing clear, predictable and proportionate regulatory pathways. This helps to maintain confidence for businesses operating in the UK veterinary medicines market and supports innovation where it aligns with regulatory standards.

Our approach contributes to Defra's economic and growth objectives by helping to ensure that regulation supports:

- continuity of supply for essential veterinary medicines;
- innovation to address emerging animal health risks; and
- fair and effective market operation.

International Engagement

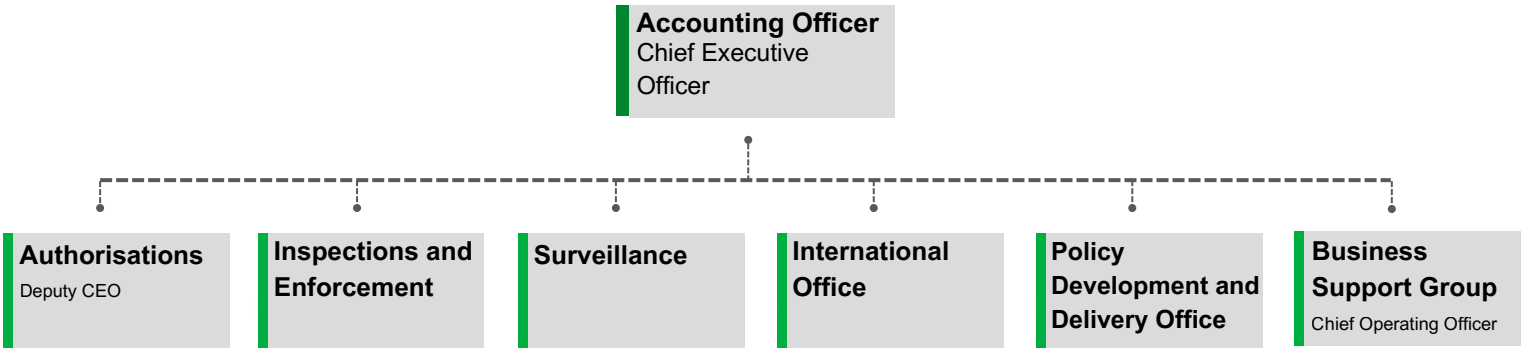
We work with international partners to support regulatory cooperation and alignment where appropriate. We also provide technical assistance to support improvements in veterinary medicines regulation in low- and middle-income countries, contributing to global animal health and disease prevention.

Through effective regulation, VMD supports economic confidence in the veterinary medicines sector. By providing clear regulatory frameworks and proportionate oversight, we help enable investment, innovation and trade while safeguarding public and animal health. Our work underpins the resilience of livestock production and the wider agri-food system, contributing indirectly to economic growth and food security.

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 2025-26, the business support group was split into two divisions to improve overall efficiency.

Supporting EMB is the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which is made up of EMB members and others from senior positions throughout the business. The SLT is to enable strategic discussions of the VMD's policy, operational, corporate and programme work. They are also responsible for effectively implementing transformational change and improvements to ways of working.

More details on our governance structure can be found in the Governance Statement on page 34.

Our Year in Numbers

Assessed

3,601

National Applications

7,487

Other Applications

Inspected

926

Manufacturers, wholesale dealers and retailers of veterinary medicines

123

Manufacturers and distributors of medicated animal feeds

Removed

>850

Online marketplace listings for breaching the VMR

Authorised

20 *vaccines*

130 *medicines*

Delivered **2**

national training events for vet med wholsalers

Delivered online training to >80 participants from across 12 regulatory authorities

Tested

28,689

Residue samples

Assessed

4,100

Applications for Import, Export and Batch Release Schemes

Processed

3,596

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 to increase the Civil Service People Survey engagement score to 65%
 **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 work to prepare for and implement the end of Grace Period in Northern Ireland was successful. The residues surveillance programme fees SI has been processed.
 **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 38 measures defined within our published standards, out of which 22 were compliant 100% of the time. A further 13 were complaint between 95% and 99%, 2 between 85% and 94% of the time. Only 1 standard fell below 85%.
 **4. Global influence and recognition** To work with other global regulatory jurisdictions to facilitate the assessment of products and post authorisation regulations for our respective marketplaces. **a)** Maintain regular liaison with overseas veterinary medicines regulators, with monthly engagement with the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and quarterly with Swissmedic[1].	**a) Substantially Met**: Monthly "Quints" meetings hosted/participated, latterly also incorporating Swissmedic. Objectives outlined within MoUs progressed, including our first parallel assessment with Swissmedic[1].

	b) Participate in VICH[2] activities, including guideline development, meetings and dossier structure work. **c)** Complete deliverables as agreed with our funders.	**b) Met**: VICH[2] steering committee and working group participation fulfilled. KPI C Substantially met: We successfully completed the deliverables agreed with our funders. The key highlights of these activities are detailed in the Performance Analysis section. **c) Substantially Met:** We successfully completed the deliverables agreed with our funders. The key highlights of these activities are detailed in the Performance Analysis section. 1.SWISSMEDIC is Swiss authority responsible for authorisation and supervision of therapeutic products. 2.VICH is an international programme aimed at harmonising technical requirements for veterinary product registration. VMD is a standing member of the VICH steering committee.
	**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 99% cost recovery for regulatory services. **b) Met**: ISO certification for both ISO 9001 and 27001 was maintained.

Outcome Key
· Met: Achieved 100% of the target
· Substantially acheived: Reached between 95% and 99% of the target
· Partially met: Delivered between 75% and 94% of the target
· Not met: Delivered less than 75% of the target

The Year Ahead

In 2026/27, the VMD will focus on sustaining and embedding improvements in regulatory delivery while responding to ongoing pressures on veterinary medicine availability, antimicrobial resistance and international regulatory alignment. Building on the improvements achieved in 2025/26, we will prioritise maintaining authorisation timeliness, supporting effective parallel GB and EU procedures, and strengthening surveillance and residues monitoring to protect animal and public health. Policy delivery will continue to support UK wide approach under the Windsor Framework, including engagement on medicine supply continuity in Northern Ireland. We will also be working with Defra on the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU. International activity will remain an important element of our work, supporting regulatory capability, knowledge sharing and the safe use of veterinary medicines globally.

Delivery of these priorities will continue to depend on a skilled, engaged and resilient workforce. We will build on investment in learning and development, with a focus on sustaining critical regulatory, scientific and inspection capability, strengthening leadership and management capacity, and supporting staff engagement and wellbeing.

We will continue to develop the use of digital tools and data to support efficient and consistent regulatory delivery. This includes the planned expansion of productivity tools such as Microsoft Copilot to support drafting, analysis and knowledge management, alongside appropriate governance and controls. We will use data and digital capability to support better informed decision making, improve transparency and reduce administrative burden.

The Year Ahead

In response to an increasingly complex cyber threat environment, we will continue to strengthen cyber security controls and staff awareness, particularly in relation to legacy systems and sensitive data, to protect regulatory operations and organisational resilience.

Collaboration will remain central to delivery. We will continue to work closely with Defra, devolved administrations and international partners to align approaches, share intelligence and support the effective delivery of our objectives.

Abigail Seager, Chief Executive
27 June 2026