



Representing the Manufacturers of Animal Medicines
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Press Release

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NEW UK REGS NEED TO ALLOW BEST COMMUNICATION AND ADVICE FOR FARMERS:

NOAH

The National Office of Animal Health welcomes indications that the UK government, in its interpretation of new EU animal medicine rules into national legislation, recognises the need to keep routes of good advice to British farmers open.

NOAH, the trade association representing the UK manufacturers of licensed animal medicines, has summarised to the VMD its views on key issues arising from the UK implementation of directive 2004/28/EC, relevant parts of the Marsh Report and the report of the Competition Commission into the supply of Prescription Only veterinary medicines (POMs), and highlights points in existing UK legislation which it believes should be amended.

“The Veterinary Medicines Directorate has been listening to stakeholders’ views on how they would wish to see the future shape of UK animal medicines legislation,” says Philip Sketchley, NOAH Chief Executive. “We have made a number of suggestions which we believe will help ensure medicines can best fulfil their role in the future health and welfare of the nation’s farm animals and pets. We hope that VMD will take these points on board as it develops its concept papers on these key issues and moves towards proposed legislation later this year.”

“The Government’s new Animal Health and Welfare Strategy includes the principle that prevention is better than cure. Medicines can help achieve this aim. NOAH lobbies strongly for the retention of qualified non-veterinarians as a source of advice on the use of certain routine preventive animal medicines and supports the creation of a category of products – dubbed by Marsh POM(C) – which could be prescribed by such qualified people. “We would see this category as encompassing the current PML livestock category,” says Mr Sketchley.

NOAH believes that there should be two categories of POM medicines. In addition to the category which could be prescribed by qualified non-veterinarians, the higher category of POM could only be prescribed by veterinary surgeons. “NOAH would not wish to see anyone but the veterinary surgeon being responsible for the prescribing of antibiotics, for example,” says Mr Sketchley. Issues regarding safety of use of medicine are already covered in the British Veterinary Association and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons’ codes of professional conduct.

The issue of advertising and promotion of prescription only animal medicines to the general public has provoked concern, particularly as all medicines for food producing animals will become, by definition, prescription only.

NOAH believes strongly that people who keep or care for animals as part of their business – especially farmers – are not ‘general public’. Farmers have a legal duty to provide safe food, to look after their animals’ welfare, and to care for the environment. Communication to farmers of the benefits of good preventive medicine is a cornerstone of the implementation of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. Farmers need to be aware of the impact of medicines on their livestock. Advertising helps to educate them about new products and options to prevent diseases of which they may be otherwise unaware. “An educated farmer is an asset,” Mr Sketchley says. “We see advertisements as a way to open a dialogue between a farmer and his veterinary surgeon and other advisors – and as a means to help improve Britain’s animal health status. It would be counterproductive to cut off totally this communication tool.”

“We look forward to further discussions on all these points with the VMD over the next few months,” Philip Sketchley added.

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Notes for editors

1. For further information contact Phil Sketchley or Alison Glennon at NOAH on 020 8367 3131, or by email noah@noah.co.uk or look at the NOAH website www.noah.co.uk
2. The National Office of Animal Health was formed on 1 January 1986 to represent the UK companies which research, develop, manufacture and market licensed animal health products. The association has 33 corporate members and 14 associate members. In 2003 NOAH's members accounted for well over 90% of the £398 million UK animal health market