Representing the Manufacturers of Animal Medicines
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Press Release

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EU Parliament decision 'disappointing', but all is not lost

Yesterday's vote by the plenary session of the European Parliament to make all medicines for food-producing animals prescription-only (POM) was very disappointing, says the organisation which represents animal medicine manufacturers in the UK.

"However, all is not lost as the UK government has pledged to the industry and the farming community that it will strive to implement the recommendation within the 'Marsh report' which would create a special list of so-called POM 'C-category' animal medicines, which would include such routine treatments as sheep vaccines, wormers, teat dips etc. This would allow AMTRA-qualified persons to continue to supply essential preventative health medicines through registered merchants premises," says Philip Sketchley, chief executive of the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH).

It is vital that this recommendation is implemented to maintain the efficient distribution of these important disease preventing medicines.

"We are encouraged by this commitment from the UK government and NOAH will support its rapid implementation," he added.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

- · **For further information, please contact Philip Sketchley or Alison Glennon of NOAH, telephone 020 8367 3131 or Andrew Kendall, Kendalls PR, telephone 01394 610022,** or visit the NOAH website, www.noah.co.uk
- · The National Office of Animal Health was formed on 1st January 1986 to represent the UK companies which research, develop, manufacture and market licensed animal health products. The association now has 34 corporate members and 14 associate members. In 2002, NOAH's members accounted for well over 90 per cent of the £389 million UK animal health market.

BACKGROUND

The Marsh Report, the Report of the Independent Review of Dispensing by Veterinary Surgeons of Prescription Only Medicines, was published in 2001, with the Government's response released in 2002. Recommendation 14 in the Report, which has been accepted in principle by the Government was as follows:

"We recommend (5.28) that the Minister should consider moving in the longer term towards adopting a system of classification that has two major categories Prescription-only Medicines and General Sale List products. We would suggest that the POM category should be divided into three sub-groups as follows:

> "POM (A) - medicines which may be administered only by a veterinary surgeon or under his/her direct supervision. In the latter instance the veterinary surgeon should be present at the time of administration and in a position to render assistance if necessary.
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> "POM (B) - medicines which may be sold or dispensed by a veterinary surgeon to animals under his care after a prior clinical examination of the animal or animals; or sold or dispensed in a pharmacy in response to a written veterinary prescription.
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> "POM (C) - medicines which may be sold or supplied by veterinarians for administration to animals under their care, or by pharmacists or, providing the purchaser can demonstrate evidence of competence in their use, by registered agricultural merchants. For this group of products a prior clinical examination of the animal(s) is not a requirement, however in cases where no evidence of competence is available the products in this category should only be made available by pharmacies, registered agricultural merchants or other registered outlets against a written prescription from a veterinarian."

AMTRA (Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority). Approximately 3200 personnel hold the recognised professional qualification from AMTRA, allowing them to authorise the sale of animal medicines sold from registered premises. Of these, 2200 work for registered agricultural merchants, 1000 for registered saddlers.

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PARLIAMENT DECISION

If the key recommendation of the Marsh Report relating to POM (C), as discussed above, were not to be implemented, the EU Parliament's decision would have several adverse impacts on animal health and welfare and the viability of the rural economy.

Adverse effects of proposals on food safety and animal health
In order for our food to be healthy, it is essential that the animals from which it is produced are themselves healthy. Livestock and horse owners are currently able to access many animal medicines through a national network of registered suppliers, employing trained and qualified personnel. This facilitates the early use of low-risk medicines within planned livestock management programmes designed to promote animal health. If availability of preventive animal medicines were to be compromised, preventative animal health management - a key factor in DEFRA's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy - could well suffer.

Encourage illegal use of animal medicines.
Making it more expensive or difficult for farmers to obtain the medicines their animals require may encourage the illegal importation of unauthorised medicines, which would be detrimental to animal health and increase the risk that food safety could be compromised. Currently the information on residues of veterinary residues published by the independent Veterinary Residues Committee (2002 figures published on 15 December) is excellent, showing animal medicines are being used responsibly.