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A member of IFAH,
the International Federation for Animal Health

Representing the Manufacturers
of UK Animal Medicines

News Release

17 January 2005

Enforcement of appropriate controls welcomed for animal medicines as RSPB report highlights pesticide issues

The National Office of Animal Health believes that the recent report by the RSPB, 'Possession of Pesticides - Time for Change' highlights the importance of appropriate controls for pesticides - the same applies to animal medicines too.

NOAH welcomes recent prosecutions by DEFRA for veterinary medicines offences. In a recent joint investigation between the Veterinary Medicines Directorate VMD (an executive agency of DEFRA) and the Republic of Ireland's Department of Agriculture a number of illegal veterinary medicines were seized from Sedborough Farm, near Bideford, Devon, following a visit to the premises in August 2003. All the medicines were antibiotics to be administered by injection and weren't authorised in the UK for administration to animals. They had been bought in the Irish Republic. The farmer was given a 12 month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £4000 costs.

And a dairy farmer from Game Farm near Fylde was given a 12 month conditional discharge after pleading guilty to veterinary medicines offences. He was also ordered to pay costs of £500. He faced nine separate charges relating to five different medicines and the case was part of a series of investigations by the VMD centred around farms in the North-West of England.

“Animal medicines have to meet very stringent criteria before they can gain a marketing authorisation and be sold or administered to animals”, said NOAH’s chief executive Phil Sketchley. “ They have to show they do what it is claimed they do, they are of good, consistent quality and that they are safe to the animal, the user of the medicine, the consumer of any animal produce and the environment. While farmers and pet owners need to have access to medicines that can keep their animals healthy, medicine distribution is controlled so appropriate advice can be given and animal welfare and food safety are not compromised.

“While illegal use is rare, as the figures published by the Veterinary Residues Committee show, it is good to know that, if someone takes an illegal action of this kind, they will get caught and prosecuted”, he added.

Ends

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 31 corporate members and 12 associate members. In 2003 NOAH's members accounted for well over 90% of the £398 million UK animal health market
3. The RSPB (Royal Society of Protection of Birds) report is called ‘Possession of Pesticides - Time for Change’. (The RSPB website address is www.rspb.org.uk)
4. For details of the prosecutions see DEFRA press releases on www.defra.gov.uk or the VMD website www.vmd.gov.uk.
5. Dorothy Craig, acting chairman of the Veterinary Residues Committee, welcomes the publication of its 2003 Annual Report, saying that it demonstrated that consumers can remain confident that the food they buy for themselves and their families is safe.