

Veterinary *Pharmacist*

January 2006

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader

Happy new year and welcome to the fourth issue of *Veterinary Pharmacist*. It is great to report another success: the seminar on pet health care ("Tails you win") held at Lambeth in November attracted enthusiastic pharmacists to learn how one can take advantage of the opportunities available for veterinary pharmacy in community practice. Incidentally, a "Cats and dogs" supplement was distributed with *The Sun* on 23 January in the Greater London area: 350,000 copies were printed, reaching nearly 950,000 readers so there should be some spin off for pharmacy.

There are a number of references to the new Veterinary Medicines Regulations and to the implications for veterinary pharmacy in this issue. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate is already considering the switch of at least one prescription-only medicine and has invited consultation on the 2006 regulations. It is intended to update and issue a new set of regulations annually.

Mike Jepson draws attention to the prescribing cascade and the importance of ensuring that the requirements are complied with. We also look at avian influenza, which is approaching our shores.

Our photograph competition returns and it is a bit more difficult this time. Entries last time came from far and wide, including from Stephen Martin, chief staff pharmacist at the Iowa State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital. The winners were Phil Neale of Ware and Liz Groves of Keighley, who spotted the Suffolk sheep that I snapped at the Grantown-on-Spey show last summer.

Finally, I am always looking for copy and photographs so if you fancy yourself as a journalist or have any comments please get in touch at:
vetpharmnewsletter@yahoo.co.uk

Steven Kayne

Animal Medicines Inspectorate moves

The Animal Medicines Inspectorate (AMI) of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society became part of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on 1 January. As a result of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005 coming into force, the Society's statutory obligations in relation to animal medicines under the Medicines Act have been removed. This has presented an opportunity to preserve the skills and expertise of the AMI and to position the organisation within the VMD for the benefit of both organisations.

The role of the AMI will remain unchanged in the short term but will be reviewed during 2006. Its five inspectors will continue to operate regionally with an ad-

ministrative office based in either Stoneleigh or Coventry.

Ann Lewis, secretary and registrar of the Society, said: "The work of the AMI and the Society will continue to have substantial crossover with future working relationships clarified through a memorandum of understanding. Our thanks go to all AMI staff who have made a considerable contribution to the work of the Society and to both animal and public health and will continue to do so in the future."

AMI inspectors are authorised under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005 and currently inspect and approve manufacturers of medicated or zootechnical animal feedstuffs and retailers of some restricted veterinary medicines under an agreement with the VMD.

Avian influenza could be the next plague

There is current public and media concern over the advance of avian influenza across western Europe. This is not misplaced. The current subtype of avian flu, H5N1, has caused a number of human deaths in south east Asia since 1997, when it was first seen in Hong Kong. In addition, many millions of birds have died and others have been culled in attempts to contain the infection.

The current influenza type A H5N1 subtype, is pathogenic in birds, felines, including large cats (tigers and leopards at Bangkok Zoo died after eating infected chicken carcasses), apes and humans. Of major concern in prediction modelling and control of a possible pandemic is the ease of movement of humans around the globe and the migration patterns of birds, which appear to have led to the recent rapid movement of the strain.

There have been several cases of infected birds being found in illegal shipments, including two cases in Belgium in birds originating in south east Asia, and cases in the UK of legally traded birds in quarantine in Essex dying of the disease.

As of 20 October there were 118 confirmed human cases of bird flu, of whom 61 had died — a mortality rate in excess of 50 per cent. Currently, the virus spreads by an avian to human infective route. However, if the virus mutates by recombination in a human subject already infected with a human influenza virus so that it can then pass from



Philip Connelly

human to human, this could lead to a pandemic strain capable of causing mass infection, and possibly 50,000 deaths in the UK according to the latest Health Protection Agency estimate. As *Veterinary Pharmacist* went to press 20 new cases of bird flu in Turkey had been reported — *Martin Shakespeare*

Date for your diary

VPG summer conference

16 July 2006

Stratford-upon-Avon

Full details in the next newsletter



“Tails you win” — autumn seminar highlights

A seminar on pet health care was held at Lambeth on 8 November. A summary of the highlights is given here



Speakers from the seminar (left to right): Andrew McCoig, Phil Sketchley, John Fitzgerald, Hemant Patel, Martin Shakespeare, David Evans and Steven Kayne

- The President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Hemant Patel, welcomed delegates. The meeting had been organised principally for the benefit of London pharmacists but it attracted delegates from as far as Birmingham.
- John Fitzgerald, director of policy at the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, discussed the challenges and opportunities afforded by the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005. The new regulations established legislation specifically designed for veterinary medicines.
- Phil Sketchley, chief executive of the National Office of Animal Health, said

that the worming market could grow three- or four-fold if all pets had basic treatment, and that pharmacists could play a significant part in this expansion.

- Veterinary pharmacist David Evans, Ilkeston, introduced pharmaceutical care for pets. Mr Evans believes this is an emerging opportunity for pharmacists.
- Martin Shakespeare, a veterinary pharmacist at the Ministry of Defence, said that continual concerted efforts were needed in terms of quarantine, food hygiene and surveillance to ensure that any significant outbreak of zoonotic disease was controlled rapidly and treated appropriately.

- The Society's veterinary pharmacy programme was outlined by joint course director Steven Kayne, who also announced the availability of a new PowerPoint presentation to publicise veterinary pharmacy (contact lorraine.fearon@rpsgb.org). The VPG has produced the presentation for use at branch meetings. AVPG member is willing to speak at branch meetings but there is also guidance for branch members to make the presentation.

A more detailed meeting report was published in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* (3 December 2005, p701).

New in 2006: Certificate in Livestock Health and Husbandry

The Veterinary Pharmacists Group committee and its postgraduate course programme steering committee, plan to launch a new certificate for the benefit of veterinary pharmacists who are focused more exclusively on commercial livestock farming: the Certificate in Livestock Health and Husbandry.

The course may also serve the needs of experienced staff engaged in veterinary pharmacy businesses who would benefit from consolidating their background knowledge.

The certificate programme is expected to consist of the following:

- Modules 3 and 4 of the Diploma in Veterinary Pharmacy course (this involves an intensive week-long residential course held at Harper Adams University College, Newport, Shropshire)
- A written assignment
- A three-hour written examination
- A record of 50 hours' relevant practical experience

Further details are available from Lorraine Fearon, VPG secretary (e-mail: lorraine.fearon@rpsgb.org)

Veterinary pharmacy reference sources

To check the legal classification of a veterinary medicine (“Medicines, ethics and practice” was out of date in November 2005) the best source of information is the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website (www.vmd.gov.uk), which is continually updated. This is also the route to MAVIS, a quarterly information bulletin that lists new products, withdrawals and expired marketing authorisations. Other items include “residues controls and monitoring” — information that can help pharmacists respond to queries relating to some food and public health issues. — *Michael Jepson*

Is your client's pet stressed out?

Hectic modern lifestyles mean that stress in humans is well documented and recognised as a significant cause of health problems. Pets are known to relieve this stress but pet owners rarely stop to consider how their pet is feeling. Pet owners need to be able to recognise the warning signs of pet stress and to understand the causes.

In most pets, stress is a minor problem and can be avoided. The Pet Health Council encourages pet owners to prevent stress by learning to modify factors that make an animal feel nervous. Pet behaviourists emphasise that this should start from the moment a new puppy or kitten is brought home. Pets need to learn how to interact with people and with other animals — a process called socialisation. Without this interaction the animal can feel threatened by simple challenges, such as the noise of a vacuum cleaner or the arrival of guests.

Pets can suffer stress through the loss of another animal within the household with whom it has learnt to co-exist and some dogs display behaviours like barking, chewing and what is euphemistically called "inappropriate elimination" when their owners go out. In some cases medication may be necessary. The tricyclic antidepressant clomipramine can be prescribed by vets to treat separation anxiety, and selegiline can be used to treat cognitive dysfunction syndrome, an age-related mental deterioration.

The Pet Health Council leaflet "Stressed pets" details, briefly, the causes of stress in pets, tells pet owners how to recognise the symptoms (eg, signs in dogs include refusal to eat or groom and excessive panting) and suggests ways of preventing it (www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk). The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (01386 751151) may also be of assistance.

Competition

Identify this breed of animal and say with which English county it is associated. A pair of prizes will go to the first two correct answers received.

Answers to: vetpharmnewsletter@yahoo.co.uk



Pharmacists could focus on large animals

In a second article on how large animal pharmacy could create opportunity for pharmacists,

Rob Morris casts an eye at the industry and retailers

Radical change has occurred in the veterinary pharmaceutical industry — readers cannot have failed to notice the ongoing press in relation to the review of veterinary medicines legislation and classification.

Veterinary surgeons currently have a vast array of prescription-only medicines that in the main only they can prescribe and dispense. In contrast, a relatively small number of POM-VPS medicines can be supplied by pharmacists and animal health merchants. Over a year or two, however, this may well change as many large animal preventive or management POM-Vs could be reclassified for pharmacy and merchant prescribing. This is by no means certain, but the Government is committed to providing farmers with more choice of where they obtain their medicines, provided it does not compromise animal welfare or consumer safety.

The professionalism of pharmacy and merchant suppliers will, therefore, have

to increase. Furthermore, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and Government (as well as consumers) must be satisfied that farmers are getting appropriate advice from well-trained professionals working from accredited premises. Animal health merchants will have to raise their game to be able to prescribe and supply such medicines and, again, this is where pharmacists might come in.

Like farms, the supply chain for veterinary medicines is not immune to economies of scale. Suppliers are becoming fewer, more specialised and larger — often integrated into large country chain-stores and co-operatives. These suppliers could well require a pharmacist to oversee veterinary pharmacies that make up a multi-million pound business. Even vets might consider working alongside a pharmacy-based business.

In future, specialisation and focus will become essential to offer the best service possible.

Latest suspected adverse veterinary drug reactions report

Figures for suspected adverse veterinary drug reactions released for the quarter ending in September 2005 indicate 531 reports involving animals (78 related to unauthorised use). Nineteen reports were considered unlikely to be product-related. There were also 32 reports of suspected reactions in humans (all serious ones are considered by the Appraisal Panel for Human Suspected Adverse Reactions to

Veterinary Medicines). As with human medicines, there is a lack of reporting. Pharmacists and GPs account for only 5 per cent of reports, and vets for 7 per cent; most cases are reported by farmers and manufacturers. Freepost report forms are available from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and copies are included in the Veterinary Medicinal Products Data Sheet Compendium.

VPG to participate in consultation on animal health and welfare

The VPG has been invited to consult on the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy for Great Britain by the England Implementation Group (EIG). The EIG is an independent body established to drive forward delivery of the vision and strategic aims of the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy. In pursuit of this objective the EIG will work with Government, the livestock and food industries, animal owners, the veterinary profession, consumers and other stakeholders to foster wide ownership of the strategy and a shared commitment to its outcomes. It will give advice to the Chief Veterinary Officer and to ministers on matters within the scope of the strategy, including government regulation of animal health and welfare. It will also give advice on any matters specifically remitted to it by the Chief Veterinary Officer or ministers.

According to VPG member Phil Jobson, pharmacists are ideally placed to advise on health problems and the prevention of disease in animals. They can supply remedies or refer the client to a veterinary surgeon or nurse for vaccination of the animal.

"Funding of a referral scheme for pets would encourage co-operation between pharmacists, who are accessible to a large number of animal owners, and vets who see only a minority of England's companion animals," Mr Jobson added.



VPG chairman's comments

Under the new veterinary regulations, pharmacists are required to work in a different legal environment for veterinary medicines than for human medicines. The Medicines Act 1968 has been disapplied for veterinary medicines. This creates a unique situation for pharmacists. For example, dispensing a human medicine on a veterinary prescription must conform to the terms of the "prescribing cascade" and the practice division is updating its guidance to give a clearer understanding of issues around labelling, training, supervision and advertising (see articles right).

In November 2005, a successful seminar on pet medicine and community pharmacy was held in Lambeth (see pV2). The VPG is grateful to the President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Hemant Patel, for acting as chairman for the evening. Also in November Sue Kilby left the Society. I would like to express thanks to Sue for the guidance and support she gave to the VPG. Robert Clayton has taken up custodianship of the practice division and we look forward to working with him to support pharmacists involved in the supply of veterinary medicines.

We look forward to a year that hosts significant pet medicine activity in community pharmacy and pharmacists could adopt an additional area of activity that can be professionally rewarding and lucrative. They can supplement what vets do, adding to the welfare of pets and, by tackling the zoonoses issue, add to better animal and human health. — *Andrew Cairns*

IN BRIEF

Pets on prescription?

Patients with long-term illnesses are being given dogs. The theory is that a dog provides an incentive for exercise and staves off depression. Stroking pets relaxes people and increases concentrations of "feel good" chemicals (eg, endorphins) in the blood. At least one health authority in England believes that grants of up to £1,000 to spend on pets is a good use of funds. Predictably, the idea of NHS hounds has been criticised as a waste of scarce resources but managers who are piloting the idea at Lewisham Primary Care Trust, London, insist the project could save money long-term by promoting better health. The UK charity Pets as Therapy has 3,500 dogs and 90 cats, which visit hospitals. A study carried out by the University of Pennsylvania showed that people with pets were more likely to survive a heart attack. Scientists also found that the average cholesterol level of patients who own pets is 2 per cent lower than those who do not. — *The Scotsman*, 8 August 2005

Veterinary prescribing cascade

Michael Jepson clarifies the position regarding the veterinary use of human medicines

It is illegal for pharmacists to supply an authorised (licensed) human medicine for animal use other than under the prescribing cascade, the provisions of which are designed to avoid unacceptable suffering when no veterinary authorised product exists for a species or condition. Under such circumstances:

- A veterinary surgeon may prescribe an authorised veterinary medicine for use in another animal species or for another condition in the same species (off-label use).
- If no such product exists, a vet may prescribe, supply or administer an authorised human medicine.
- Finally, if there is no suitable human product a pharmacist or a vet may prepare

a veterinary medicinal product extemporaneously.

- An extension has been made to allow the use of products authorised in other EU member countries. However, this requires a vet to apply to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate on-line. In order to further contain the use of unauthorised medicines, it is now a criminal offence to be in possession of such products.

Steps should be taken to ensure that veterinary prescriptions comply with the appropriate regulations. Abuse of the cascade is now a criminal offence. "Medicines, ethics and practice" (July 2005) includes further information on the prescribing cascade (see p73).

Practice guidance for pharmacists on Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2005

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society is producing updated practice guidance for pharmacists on the new veterinary medicines regulations, which highlights the new classifications for veterinary medicines. The P (Pharmacy) category no longer exists and there is a separate category for non-food producing animals (NFA-VPS) which can be supplied by a veterinary surgeon, pharmacist or suitably qualified person without a prescription.

The requirements necessary for a pharmacist to dispense a veterinary prescription are listed. The guidance outlines the best practice labelling guidelines for dispensing veterinary prescriptions and breaking bulk.

Pharmacists need to be aware of the veterinary cascade in case they receive a pre-

scription for a human medicine for administration to an animal. The veterinary cascade is explained in addition to the labelling requirements for veterinary medicinal products used under the cascade.

Most pharmacists are more likely to come into contact with non-food producing animals (eg, companion animals) than with animals that will enter the food chain (ie, food-producing animals) and the guidance has a section on this.

Where medicines are targeted for animals that will enter the food chain certain restrictions apply, such as withdrawal periods and record keeping, and these are highlighted.

The practice guidance is likely to be available on the Society's website (www.rpsgb.org) in March. — *Baldip Dhariwal*



Two of New Zealand's greatest assets captured in one shot — its sheep and its vineyards!