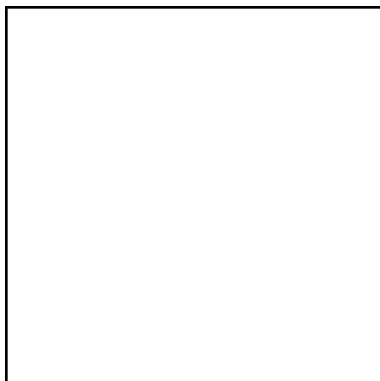




Veterinary medicines

Safe use by farmers and other animal handlers



This leaflet is for farmers and other people who use veterinary medicines (including medicated feeds) as part of their work. It sets out the practical steps you should take to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 1994. It is one of a series of leaflets about safety in agriculture, one of which (AS29(rev2)) deals specifically with sheep dips.

What do you need to do to comply with COSHH?

You have to prevent or adequately control risks to health arising from the use of veterinary medicines in your work. This is what you should do:

- Assess the risks by finding out what harmful effects the medicine might have, if any, and estimating the exposure of people who come into contact with it.
- If there is more than one product that will effectively treat the animal, use the least hazardous.
- Use control measures to reduce exposure. Check regularly that they are working. Check them if the nature of the work changes.
- Keep everyone informed of the risks and precautions needed, consulting workers' safety representatives if your business has them.
- Review the above regularly or if the nature of the work changes, but at least every five years.



Assessment

Step 1: Do you need to treat at all?

Use veterinary medicines only when necessary for animal health reasons. If in doubt consult your vet.

If you must use a veterinary medicine then:

Step 2: Look for the hazard

Identify the range of authorised products available. Some products contain hazardous substances which may poison or pollute if misused. The product label, package insert or safety data sheet (if available from your supplier or manufacturer) will tell you if the medicine you want to use can be harmful to health or to the environment.

Step 3: Consider who might be harmed and how

Veterinary medicines can get into the body by being:

- absorbed through the skin (for example by using bare hands to apply ointments or shampoos, by spillage or by splashing);
- accidentally self-injected;
- swallowed; or
- breathed in as a vapour or aerosol.

Remember that there may be a risk of catching a disease from the animal being treated, although the risk of infection may be higher if the animal is not treated. These 'zoonotic' diseases, for example ringworm and leptospirosis, may require extra precautions. Dispose safely of unused products or any equipment used to administer medicines.



Carefully check:

- the dose and quantities you plan to use (contractors and their employees are likely to be at greater risk because greater quantities are used and exposure is more frequent);
- the application method;
- the numbers of people and animals involved (the longer the job the more tired people get and the greater the chance of mistakes);
- the other people who might be affected, eg those handling the animals later;
- the risk of harm or pollution from use or disposal of medicines or used application equipment, especially sharps;
- the risk to women of child-bearing age who are, or think they might be, pregnant, or those with an existing health condition that might be worsened.

Talking with workers' safety representatives, if your business has them, will help you to identify risks from particular work practices.

Step 4: Choose the treatment

Decide which of the range of authorised treatments is best to prevent or control the condition in animals but poses the least risk to people and the environment. If in doubt get advice from your vet.

For more guidance on the best form of treatment, consult the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's *Code of Practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm* (to be published in spring 1998).



Controls - planning and preparation

Step 5: What controls are needed?

- Read the label, package insert and, if available, safety data sheets.
- Follow the product instructions or the veterinary advice.
- Don't buy more medicines than needed. Storage creates a risk.

Engineering controls

- Choose the best site and the right facilities for the treatment.
- Check that you have the right equipment to handle and restrain the animals: a race will help avoid contamination when applying pour on products; a cattle crush might be suitable for drenching but not injections.
- Is there equipment available that gives better operator protection than that currently in use? For example applicators with shrouded needles can reduce the risk of accidental injections.
- Is ventilation adequate? Can the work be done outside or is extraction equipment necessary?
- Washing facilities will be needed for emergencies, for breaks in the work and at the end of the treatment.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Your first choice should be to use the least hazardous appropriate product or improve engineering controls. But even after taking these



precautions there may still be risks that require PPE, for example, gloves, aprons, protective suits, face shields or respirators.

Any PPE, including respiratory protective equipment (RPE) manufactured after 30 June 1995 must be CE marked. This means that the PPE satisfies certain basic safety requirements, and in most cases will have been tested and certified by an independent body. PPE manufactured before that date which is not CE marked can still be used as long as it gives sufficient protection and is properly maintained and, in the case of RPE, was also approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

PPE may not necessarily be marketed specifically for use with the veterinary medicine you are using, so check if necessary with the manufacturer of the PPE or medicine that it is suitable.

Assessing the suitability of protective equipment

Does it:

- do the job and protect against the actual chemical used? For example a dust mask does not protect the wearer from toxic fumes;
- fit properly while not making you hot and uncomfortable?
- permit enough movement?

Is it:

- robust?
- compatible with any other PPE being used?
- properly fitted and maintained? Are filters for RPE within their expiry date?



- clean and not liable to contaminate its user?

Remember to dispose of water used for washing PPE properly - a small discharge can pollute many hundred metres of a watercourse.

Consult workers or their safety representatives about choosing PPE that fits and is suitable for them. Properly train users in how to use, maintain and clean the equipment. HSE also publishes guidance on RPE (see 'Further reading' section).

Competence and training

Instruction

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require employers to take care in assessing employees' competence to do their work safely. You should take into account their capabilities and their knowledge and the training they have had.

COSHH also requires you as an employer to provide adequate information, instruction and training about the risks from using the product and the precautions that are needed. This includes any symptoms of ill health associated with the medicine.

If your business has them, workers' safety and other representatives will have knowledge of work practices and will be able to help get the safety message across. Discussions with them can identify where knowledge is lacking and where training is necessary. If operators working on your farm or premises are self-employed or employed by others, they must be told of the risks and controls.

Completing an element or unit of competence



within an appropriate National or Scottish Vocational Qualification or possession of a National Proficiency Tests Council or Scottish Skills Testing Service accredited certificate of competence will help to demonstrate operators' competence. Contact numbers are listed in the 'Further reading' section. HSE's publication AS29(rev2), *Sheep dipping* gives the rules about training for people buying sheep dips.

Health surveillance

Health surveillance is a requirement of COSHH in some circumstances. It can help spot at an early stage whether exposure to hazards at work is causing ill health and help you to check whether your control measures are working. If you are self-employed you are exempt from this aspect of COSHH, but HSE recommends that you should adopt the same standards for yourself as you should for any employees.

Whether health surveillance is needed and what you need to do should be decided as part of your COSHH assessment. It is relevant only where there is a particular condition associated with the substance that is reasonably likely to occur and there is a valid technique to detect the condition in exposed people. HSE's Employment Medical Advisory Service can give you more advice.

Where the risk is low, health surveillance might be no more than simply keeping a health record. At the other extreme, it might require medical surveillance, including monitoring blood or urine samples under medical supervision. Before deciding to institute biological monitoring, employers should consult their workers or their safety or other representatives.

For most veterinary medicines, provided that everyone who uses them follows the label instructions and the controls identified in the



COSHH assessment, health surveillance will not normally be required. It is important that users are trained to recognise any symptoms of illness that might be caused from:

- exposure to the medicines;
- any zoonotic diseases; or
- any incident such as an accidental stabbing.

Keep a list of who to report incidents to and how to get help - keep emergency numbers to hand. Worker safety representatives can help get the information across. Anyone who feels unwell after using a medicine should seek medical advice as soon as possible. Note the product's label details so you can tell the doctor what you were using.

After treatment

- Check that there are no continuing risks after treatment (eg some ectoparasitic treatments remain on the skin and hair of the animal for weeks or months, to protect it). Remember that treated animals can also pollute watercourses.
- Clean and/or sterilise equipment following the suppliers'/manufacturers' recommendations.
- You must observe the withdrawal periods for food-producing animals. For further guidance consult the VMD's *Code of Practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm*.

Disposal

- Dispose of all out-of-date or unwanted medicines, sharps, application equipment and used containers properly.



- Do not pollute surface waters (including ditches) or ground waters. See the information on the medicine label or package insert and consult the supplier if necessary.
- Waste may be 'controlled waste' (under the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994). It must be disposed of in a licensed facility.
- It may also be 'special waste' and be subject to special disposal procedures under the Special Waste Regulations 1996. If in doubt, contact the Environment Agency (EA) or the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). Both produce guidance and can also advise you.
- Advice for disposal of sheep dips is given in HSE's leaflet AS29(rev2). The MAFF/HSC publication *Code of Practice for safe use of pesticides on farms and holdings* also gives some useful advice.

Storage

- Store medicines in accordance with the label instructions. Separate them from application equipment in a secure, lockable store which is safe from children, vermin and birds. The store can be a container, cupboard, room or a separate building, but it should be safe from accidental damage, where possible fire-proof for at least 30 minutes, and able to contain any spillage.
- Protect drains that might be polluted.
- Keep medicines away from domestic, office or public access areas as well as food, drink and animal feed, to reduce the risk of mix-ups,



contamination or medicines being taken by mistake.

- Keep store records for stock control purposes. Consider any special requirements for controlled drugs. A separate duplicate list may help the fire services in an emergency.
- Do not keep vaccines etc that need chilling in fridges or other containers used for food.

Reviewing your assessment

Step 6: COSHH assessment review

Review the assessment if significant changes occur, or at least every five years. Significant changes include using different medicines, application methods and the numbers of animals treated. Note any changes or updates. Consider any lower risk medicines which become available and use them instead if they will do the job. Ask your vet or supplier.

Consult worker safety or other representatives if there is a change to the work practice that has implications for health and safety. This includes changing from a low- to a high-hazard medicine.

Records

In addition to disposal records, COSHH assessments should be written down unless they can be easily repeated and explained.

Advice on records which must be kept of animal medicines used on the farm can be found in the Animal and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1997.



Reporting

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) require employers or people in charge of premises to report to HSE any deaths, certain injuries or diseases and dangerous occurrences caused by work. These include:

- loss of consciousness caused by exposure to a harmful substance or absorption of any substance;
- acute illness requiring medical treatment resulting from absorbing any substance;
- cases of phosphorus (including organophosphorus) poisonings diagnosed by a doctor.

Anyone who feels unwell following the use of a veterinary medicine should seek medical advice as soon as possible. It is especially important to tell your doctor of any persistent or long-term effects. If it is decided that the symptoms could be due to veterinary medicines, including sheep dips, then your case should be reported to the Suspected Adverse Reactions Surveillance Scheme (SARSS) operated by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) (Tel: 01932 336911).

Any ill health of animals resulting from exposure to veterinary medicines should be reported via a vet or directly to SARSS. VMD monitors any problems involving humans or animals that may arise with these medicines and, if necessary, reviews the licensing provisions.

Contamination of the environment must be reported immediately to EA or SEPA.



Further reading

Free leaflets

Code of Practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm (due out in spring 1998) available free from Strategic Support, VMD, Woodham Lane, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 3NB

Consulting employees on health and safety: A guide to the law INDG232 HSE Books 1996

COSHH in agriculture AS28 HSE Books 1997

COSHH: The new brief guide for employers INDG136 HSE Books 1996

Health and safety policies and risk assessment in agriculture IAC/L30(rev) HSE Books 1997

Sheep dipping AS29(rev2) HSE Books 1997

Priced publications

A guide to the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 L95 HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1234 1

MAFF and HSC Pesticides: Code of practice for the safe use of pesticides on farms and holdings ISBN 0 11 242892 4 HMSO 1990 (The Green Code, available from The Publications Centre, Tel: 0171 873 9090)

Pollution prevention guidelines: Sheep dipping (PPG12) is available from the Environment Agency (EA), Tel: 01454 624400

Prevention of environmental pollution from agricultural activity (The PEPFAA Code) is



available from the Scottish Office (Tel: 0131 244 6257), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) (Tel: 01786 457700) or any office of the Scottish Agricultural College.

Respiratory protective equipment: A practical guide for users HSG53 HSE Books 1990 ISBN 0 7176 1198 1 (a new edition is due in early 1998)

Respiratory protective equipment: legislative requirements and lists of approved standards and type approved equipment (Fourth edition) HSE Books 1995 ISBN 0 7176 1036 5

Safety representatives and safety committees L87 (Third edition) HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1220 1

The Animal and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1997 The Stationery Office 1997 SI 1729/1997 ISBN 0 11 064821 8 (Available from The Publications Centre, Tel: 0171 873 9090)

The occupational zoonoses HSE Books 1992 ISBN 0 11 886397 5

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate can be contacted on 01932 336911.

Information on certificates of competence can be obtained from the National Proficiency Tests Council (Tel: 01203 696553) and the Scottish Skills Testing Service (Tel: 0131 333 2040).

The future availability and accuracy of the references listed in this publication cannot be guaranteed.



Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's InfoLine Tel: 08701 545500 Fax: 02920 859260 e-mail: hseinformationsservices@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG. You can also visit HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.



List Of Agricultural Safety Leaflets

- AS 5 Farmer's lung
- AS 7 Guns
- AS 8 Noise
- AS 10 Accidents to children
- AS 15 Farm and estate forestry operations
- AS 16 Tractor-trailer safety: Brakes
- AS 17 Electricity on the farm
- AS 20 Safe use of chainsaws
- AS 22 Prevention of tractors overturning
- AS 23 Handling loads in agriculture
- AS 24 Power take-offs and power take-off drive shafts
- AS 27 Agricultural pesticides
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- AS 29 Sheep dipping
- AS 30 COSHH in forestry

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