



Game Feed  
Trade  
Association



BRITISH  
GAME  
ALLIANCE



British Veterinary Association



RESPONSIBLE USE OF MEDICINES IN AGRICULTURE ALLIANCE



The  
NATIONAL  
GAMEKEEPERS'  
Organisation  
*Keeping the Balance*™



## Important Joint Communication: Spring 2019

### **We Must Keep Driving Down Antibiotic Use in Gamebirds**

By working together over the last two years, game farmers, gamekeepers, their vets and their feed suppliers have reduced antibiotic use in gamebirds by 51%. It's been a brilliant response to an urgent campaign initiated by the Game Farmers' Association and supported by all the above organisations.

But we have to get antibiotic use down a lot further whilst maintaining the health and welfare of our gamebirds.

Life-threatening diseases of humans and animals are continuing to show signs of resistance to all known antibiotics. People are dying as a result. Operations are becoming more dangerous and health professionals and animal keepers are finding it more difficult to treat diseases effectively. A major contributing factor is that antibiotic use across the world has been far too liberal. To save lives and to keep these medicines available for essential treatments where nothing else will do, every sector needs to focus on responsible antibiotic reduction.

The UK is one of the leaders in this worldwide effort. Our health professionals and livestock sectors are now running effective, voluntary antibiotic reduction campaigns, with set targets and annual assessments. These efforts are focused on the principle that "prevention is better than cure". Reduction results for all livestock sectors are published annually in the Government's VARSS report, available to the public.

The gamebird sector's hard-won antibiotic reductions are in the VARSS report too, alongside everyone else's. They show that we are doing well but that ours remains a high use sector. If we cannot voluntarily reduce our overall antibiotic usage to the minimum necessary, the authorities will have no option but to tighten the regulatory framework and introduce further restrictions on access to antibiotics.

Last year, our joint communication to the gamebird sector highlighted the importance of good biosecurity and top quality management practices to reduce the need to use antibiotics. Many gamebird keepers have gone down that route, working closely with their

specialist gamebird vets to advise them. Such measures make sense because they can also result in fitter birds and, ultimately, lower costs. These people have proved that high antibiotic use is unnecessary in good gamebird production and we encourage everyone to follow their example.

This year, the focus of our campaign is to ensure that all antibiotics used in gamebirds are not only necessary but also correctly prescribed and lawfully obtained. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate have written the attached *'Reminder on best practice concerning the prescribing and supply of antibiotics for gamebirds'*. Please read this carefully and make sure that any antibiotics that you are involved with are being properly prescribed, obtained and used. If not, you could risk prosecution by the VMD or, in the case of vets, disciplinary action by the RCVS.

And if you know of anyone who is not playing by the rules, please report them to the authorities as described in the attached reminder.

We are all in this together and must work as a team to get improper and unnecessary use of antibiotics down. It's for the ultimate benefit of us all.

Thank you.



Veterinary  
Medicines  
Directorate

RCVS

## Reminder on best practice concerning the prescribing and supply of antibiotics for gamebirds

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) would like to explain the legislation that governs the prescribing and supply of antibiotics, and would encourage anyone within the gamebird sector who has any concerns or suspicions of misconduct to report this as outlined.

A veterinary surgeon who prescribes a veterinary medicinal product classified as a POM-V, which includes all antibiotics, must first carry out a clinical assessment of the bird(s) and the bird(s) must be under that veterinary surgeon's care. A veterinary surgeon cannot usually have a bird under his or her care if there has been no physical examination.

In terms of current RCVS Code of professional conduct / guidance, in order for a bird to be under his/her care:

- The veterinary surgeon must have been given the responsibility for the health of the bird or flock by the owner or the owner's agent, and this must be real not nominal
- The bird or flock must have been seen immediately before prescription or recently/ often enough for the veterinary surgeon to have personal knowledge of the condition of the bird or current health status of the flock to make a diagnosis and prescribe
- The veterinary surgeon must maintain clinical records of that flock/ individual

Obligations also exist in relation to provision of 24 hour emergency first aid and pain relief.

Antibiotics should not be 'borrowed' or moved between farms or groups of birds on a farm as they are prescribed for a specific site, species and population.

If you are a veterinary surgeon and have any concerns about the conduct of a veterinary professional in relation to the Code of professional conduct, then these can be reported to the RCVS via:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/concerns/im-a-vet-professional-and-i-want-to-raise-a-concern/>

Or, if you are an animal owner, you should visit: <https://animalowners.rcvs.org.uk/concerns/>

The VMD enforces the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR) and takes the issue of illegal supply of medicines (such as the use of unauthorised antibiotics) and suspected prescription misuse very seriously. Some examples of contraventions are:

- ***Illegal supply of medicines*** –
  - Veterinary medicines which are advertised for the treatment or prevention of disease, or which have that function, must be authorised by the VMD before they can be legally sold or used in the UK.
  - The marketing, importation, sale, supply, administration and possession of a veterinary medicine not in line with the regulations is illegal.
  
- ***Prescription misuse*** - this includes:
  - *Alteration of an existing prescription* – including changing the date the prescription was signed, changing the quantity of the product, inclusion of additional medicines or altering the number of repeats
  - *Prescription fraud* – includes supplying the same prescriptions to multiple retailers for supply and forging the signature of a vet, pharmacist or Suitably Qualified Person

Any known contravention should be reported to the VMD who will consider whether enforcement action is required. If you have any information about suspected illegal medicines use then please contact the VMD on: [enforcement@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enforcement@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk). You can also find a prescriptions misuse reporting form at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-prescription-misuse-animal-medicine>.

All information will be treated confidentially and will be considered carefully in line with the VMD's enforcement strategy\*.

If you have any further questions then please get in contact with either RCVS or VMD.

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\*VMD Enforcement Strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enforcement-strategy-for-animal-medicines>

Enforcement Notices

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-animal-medicines-seizure-and-improvement-notices>