



**Minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Veterinary Residues Committee,  
Wednesday 12 November 2008,  
Beardmore Hotel, Clydebank, Glasgow.**

**Members present:**

Mrs Dorothy Craig	(Chairman)	DC
Mr John Ambrose		JA
Dr Paul Brantom		PB
Mrs Sarah Buckley		SB
Mr Neil Cutler		NC
Mrs Susan Knox		SK
Dr W John McCaughey		WJMcC

Mr Eric Crutcher	EC	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Mr David Webb	DW	" " " (Secretariat)
Mrs Maggie Green	MG	" " "
Mr John Points	JP	LGC Limited
Dr Glenn Kennedy	DGK	Agri-Food Biosciences Institute
Mr Matthew Sharman	MS	Central Science Laboratory
Mr Andrew Spencer	AS	Food Standards Agency
Mr Will Munro	WM	Food Standards Agency, Scotland
Mr Rob Pettitt	RP	Animal Health

**Action Points**

- 2.1.3. To provide the Committee with an update on work to establish baseline concentrations for boldenone at its next meeting.  
*Action: Dr Jack Kay*
- 2.1.5 To consider further publicity on the use of phenylbutazone in horses to inform vets and owners.  
*Action VMD*
- 2.1.6 To ensure that drivers delivering feed to farms are targeted as part of the FSA's e-leaflet campaign on nicarbazin residues.  
*Action: FSA*
- 2.1.7 To write to the vet in relation to the enrofloxacin residues reminding them of their responsibilities in relation to Withdrawal Periods.  
*Action: VMD*
- 3.2.1 To carry out a small scale survey of eggs and egg products for residues of coccidiostats, nitroimidazoles and nitrofurans.  
*Action: VMD*

3.3.2 **MG** would liaise with **MS** of the CSL to produce a detailed Non-Statutory programme, based on the sampling strategy agreed at the VRC meeting, which would be circulated for agreement by e-mail.

**Action: MG and MS**

5.3 To post Dr John Webster's presentation on the VRC Website.

**Action: VMD**

## **Declarations of interest**

**DC** reminded members that if they had any interest in a particular agenda item, they must declare it.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies had been received from: Keith Lawrence, Stephen Lister, Shirley Price and Brian Vernon.

### **2. National Surveillance Scheme**

**VRC/08/40**

#### **2.1 GB Results to date**

2.1.1 **MG** told the meeting that the programme was close to being completed. There were a few shortfalls in some areas, but for seasonal commodities, such as turkey, more samples are taken in the run up to Christmas.

2.1.2 The meeting heard about the increase in the number of analyses that were being carried out in 2008. This was being achieved by using more multi-residue methods. The VMD were still taking the required number of samples, but some of these were being tested for a broader range of substances. There was no increase in costs to the scheme, but it should give consumers better confidence in the scheme. However, as more analyses were being carried out, the results should be seen in this context, as it could result in more non-compliant samples being detected.

2.1.3 **MG** drew attention to residues of boldenone. She explained that where unconjugated boldenone was detected, rather than the conjugated substance, the likely cause was faecal contamination. This route of origin had been confirmed by research carried out by the Community Reference Laboratory. Further samples from sheep had revealed residues of nortestosterone. **MG** indicated that Dr Jack Kay was overseeing R&D that sought to establish baseline concentrations for this substance. The Committee asked for an update on this work at its next meeting.

**Action: JK**

- 2.1.4 The non-compliant results for chlortetracycline residues in pig's kidney were discussed. **MG** reported that for the residue at 1,700 ppb, both Animal Health and the Animal Medicines Inspectorate had undertaken follow-up investigations. It was suggested that the wrong additive had been used to prepare the feed.
- 2.1.5 The residues of phenylbutazone in a sample of horse plasma had occurred because the animal's passport had not been signed as 'not for human consumption' by the vet as required. This had been flagged to the Defra unit that had responsibility for the horse passport legislation. **EC** told the meeting that the horse identification legislation was to be updated and a consultation is being undertaken by Defra. This could be an opportunity to inform horse owners and vets about their responsibilities in this complex area.  
*Action: VMD*
- 2.1.6 **PB** was disappointed to see that further nicarbazin residues had been detected in broiler liver. He asked what more the Committee could do. **DC** asked the FSA about the initiative it was facilitating with the industry. **AS** said the FSA would continue to work with the industry and suggested that the FSA are in the process of developing an e-leaflet to senior management, farm workers and their managers in the poultry industry. **DC** suggested that the FSA might need to target lorry drivers, as poor practice when delivering feed could undo much good work. **AS** agreed these were key stakeholders.  
*Action: FSA*
- 2.1.7 **MG** reported on samples of free-range eggs that had been found to be non-compliant for enrofloxacin. The vet had used this substance under the cascade with a 7 day withdrawal period. It should have been at least 14 days and the VMD would write to remind the vet of his responsibilities.  
*Action: VMD*
- 2.1.8 The committee also heard of sample that had been found to be non-compliant for 1,4-dichlorobenzene. The follow-up investigation found cross-contamination to have been the most likely reason for the residue. The local authority had taken further samples.

## 2.2 **NI Results**

- 2.2.1 **DGK** reported that there had been an increase in nicarbazin residues in poultry liver. He also indicated that an EU MRL might soon be set for nicarbazin at a concentration of 750 ppb. If this was the case, very few non-compliant samples would be detected in the UK. Five new residues of progesterone in bovines had been detected. Follow-up investigations had found no evidence of illegal use.
- 2.2.2 **DGK** also told the Committee of a follow-up investigation into a phenylbutazone residue in a bovine. This had resulted in the exclusion of an illegally treated animal from the food chain. The Divisional Veterinary Officer was to write to the veterinary surgeon concerned to inform him that

phenylbutazone-based medicines are not authorised for use in food-producing animals.

- 2.2.3 The Committee discussed the integrated NI animal health computer system. All animal movements were recorded and, where needed, particular producers could be flagged up at abattoirs, allowing suspect animals to be detained. **DC** asked if a similar system was likely to be introduced in GB. **NC** indicated that this was unlikely, as NI had only five abattoirs, whereas there were very many in GB. The NI system was required as it was a major exporter of animals.

### **3. Non-Statutory Surveillance Scheme**

**VRC/08/41**

#### **3.1 Results to date**

- 3.1.1 **MG** told the meeting that the scheme was on target. The lab had completed 3,414 analyses so far. There was a minor shortfall for farmed fish, but steps were being taken to address this by taking samples at New Billingsgate Market.
- 3.1.2 Three non-compliant samples of warm-water crustaceans had been detected: two with residues of nitrofurans and one containing residues of chloramphenicol. The importer had instituted a product recall for one of the batches. Defra's CVO had written to the countries of origin. The FSA had informed the European Commission.
- 3.1.3 **MG** also reported that a sample of poultry from the Netherlands had been found to contain residues of nicarbazin at a concentration of 41 ppb. This was below the JECFA MRL so no further legislation had been undertaken. **DC** asked if the pâté survey was now complete? **MG** indicated that it was not – a total of 100 samples would be collected.

#### **3.2 Brand-name update**

- 3.2.1 **MG** reminded the meeting that the VRC had asked about a survey of eggs and egg products. She said that the feasibility of this had been investigated and samples would be hard to obtain. She suggested that a small 'look see' survey might be more appropriate. The Committee supported this option, but noted that the survey could not be brand-named.

**Action: VMD**

- 3.2.2 The Committee had recommended that the VMD survey poultry products targeted at children. A quarter of the samples were to be collected from Border Inspection Posts and the rest from shops. So far, 69 analyses had been completed on 23 samples and had indicated that the samples were compliant.

### 3.3 Consultation on the 2009 plan

3.3.1 VMD had carried out a consultation of 120 organisations on behalf of the Committee. These organisations were sent suggestions for inclusion in the 2009 programme. Five had responded. The suggestions were considered at the Non-Statutory Planning Subgroup Meeting on 24 October. The Subgroup also considered the key points from Ray Benson's (FSA) paper on probabilistic modelling and statistically representative sampling.

3.3.2 From these papers, the Subgroup recommended a sampling strategy, which was outlined in the paper to the Committee. The VMD needs to have the agreement of the Committee and the 2009 plan signed off by the end of the year to enable the sampling requests to go out in time. **DC** asked if members were content with the proposals in the paper. The Committee agreed the strategy. **MG** would liaise with **MS** of the CSL to produce a detailed programme, which would be circulated for agreement by e-mail.

*Action: MG and MS*

## 4. Question and Answer Session

4.1 **DC** asked for questions based on the business that the Committee had discussed that morning.

4.2 **Ivan Bartollo** (Sea Fish Industry Authority) asked about the turnaround times for samples in the Non-Statutory programme. He said that usually by the time the results were available, produce had already been distributed and sold. **MG** explained that the programme was not designed to keep produce out of the food-chain. The lab had 28 days to screen samples and then further time to confirm the results. If fast turn-round times were needed, the costs of the scheme would be much higher. It was acknowledged that the importer had the duty of care to ensure the produce it sourced and supplied was compliant with EU law.

4.3 **DC** asked that any results of testing carried out by the industry be supplied to the VRC, to give it the best picture of what substances were being used. This could aid the VRC in planning the Non-Statutory programme. Any results supplied to the VRC would only be used in a non-attributable form.

4.4 **EC** agreed that faster turnarounds would be likely to result in fewer tests but would be costlier in warm-water crustaceans. He outlined that the programme, between 2003 and 2006, had identified a pattern of non-compliance. The UK had hard evidence of the non-compliance that it had put to the European Commission.

4.5 **Carol Donnelly** (R-Biopharm Rhone Ltd) asked if suppliers of non-compliant consignments could be named and shamed in Rapid Alerts in the way the FSA did. **AS** agreed the FSA did publish the names of companies in the event of a food safety incident on a regular basis. However, the European Commission's policy was that only the country of origin was named in its

Rapid Alert system. However, it was acknowledged that it could help importers if suppliers as well as countries were named.

- 4.6 **John Webster** (Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation) questioned the naming of a salmon sample for residues of malachite green in a previous brand-name survey. The residue was the result of drying fish with green paper towels at retail, rather than illegal administration by a salmon producer. **MG** remembered the result. The origin of the malachite green residue had been explained in the report of the survey.
- 4.7 **Francoise de Goeijen** (DSM Nutritional Products) asked about the numbers of analyses carried out by different countries in the EU. **WJMcC** and **MG** explained that for the National (Statutory) Surveillance Scheme, the VMD collected only enough samples to meet the minimum required by the EU legislation. This is based on a proportion of the production of animals and animal products. In Great Britain, government policy was that industry paid all of the costs of the scheme as required by the EU legislation – any additional sampling would result in extra costs onto an already hard-pressed industry. It was up to other member States to decide their sampling strategy in light of the EU and other legislation.
- 4.8 **DC** suggested if an explanation could be given about how the VMD/LGC had decided how to deploy the new multi-residue methods. **JP** said that the decisions had been made on mainly pragmatic criteria. As had been explained, the VMD recovered costs of the analysis by levy, so ideally no increase in costs could result from the use of multi-residue methods. Also, the EU legislation in the main required one sample to be tested for a single substance – additional analyses on the same sample did not usually contribute to meeting the quota of analyses. The VMD and LGC would have liked to implement the extra testing with a more risk-based approach, but the EU legislation was currently not flexible enough (see 6.14).

## 5. Communications Issues

VRC/08/42

- 5.1 **PB** explained that the VRC's Annual Report for 2007 had been published as planned. The Committee had made a decision to focus on what people most want to get out of the report. The VRC website had received a small revamp during the year. The website had been redesigned previously because of feedback at a previous Open Meeting.
- 5.2 The Committee had also produced a factsheet to inform consumers about hormonal and antibiotic growth promoters. The factsheet had been based on research on what issues concerned consumers. He stressed that the Committee would welcome feedback from attendees and suggestions for further distribution.
- 5.3 **DC** asked for views. **John Webster** said that he had found the full results very helpful – was the Committee to publish them for 2007, as in previous years? **MG** indicated that in common with previous years, the full results

would be available as an annex to the main report. She would post them on the VRC and VMD websites as soon as she could.

- 5.4 **Dr Sohail Ashraf** thought that more information on the risk assessment associated with particular residues could be helpful to put any health risk into context. The Committee aims to this in the Annual Report and this interest was noted.

## 6. Update on the Review of European Legislation VRC/08/43

- 6.1 **EC** explained that the European Commission started a review of the legislation controlling veterinary residues in late 2003. The Commission indicated that while the existing legislation had resulted in a very high level of consumer protection, it had resulted in fewer medicines. This had led to some concerns for animal welfare.

- 6.2 There were three main pieces of legislation in the Commission's review. These were:

- Regulation 2377/90 – the Community's procedure for setting limits for concentrations of residues allowable in foods – Maximum Residue Limits;
- Directive 96/22/EC – prohibiting the use of certain substances in farming and the legal basis for the EU's hormone ban; and
- Directive 96/23/EC – which sets out how Member States must undertake surveillance for residues of veterinary medicines in foods.

- 6.3 On **Regulation 2377/90**, **EC** told the meeting that there was no change to the main procedure for setting EU MRLs. However, there were some measures to increase the availability of veterinary medicines. This includes adopting new Codex Alimentarius MRLs without further risk assessment, where the EU accepts the science. The EU is already a member of the Codex Alimentarius, so is able to feed into the very long process of assessment.

- 6.4 Another avenue for widening the availability of veterinary medicines is wider use of extrapolating MRLs between species and tissues. This is already an established concept, but the new regulation would require an assessment for extrapolation to be part of new MRL applications.

- 6.5 While not in the original proposal, a European Parliament amendment would increase flexibility in the cascade process and widen an existing derogation to the normal MRL procedure for horse medicines.

- 6.6 In the EU, horses are regarded as food-producing species. Medicines for food-producing species would normally require an MRL for the active ingredient. However, because of the small market for horse medicines, insufficient approved medicines are available to treat all conditions. The proposal would require an assessment by the European Medicines Agency

and have the additional safeguard of a minimum 6-month withdrawal period. This is to ensure consumers are not exposed to unacceptable residues.

- 6.7 The greatest discussion on the proposal in Council working Group had centred on setting Reference Points for Action (RPAs) for substances not authorised in the EU. The UK would like RPAs to be at a limit that could be routinely achievable by all Member State laboratories within a set timescale. This should be followed by an effort from the EU's Community Reference Laboratories to help the routine analytical laboratories in Member States reduce their detection limits in a co-ordinated way.
- 6.8 The UK is concerned that as currently proposed, harmonisation would be difficult to achieve with differing analytical limits in each Member State. This would not give the harmonised approach that the EU and third countries were seeking. It would also allow some importers to import through those Member States with the least efficient analytical methods. This would distort trade and potentially affect consumer protection, as if goods are able to enter one Member State, they are able to circulate freely in the European single market.
- 6.9 **DC** asked for the views of the meeting on this proposal. **SK** said she remained concerned over the proposals to extend the use of extrapolation and wanted RPAs set on the basis of science. **EC** stated that there were already established guidelines for how extrapolation should be carried out in a scientifically justifiable way. The proposal also stressed the need to protect consumer health when carrying out extrapolation.
- 6.10 **PB** stressed the need for limits to be set on health-based values. Some limits had recently been set based on good practice in their use, which he did not wish to see extended.
- 6.11 **EC** turned to **Directive 96/22/EC**, which puts controls on the use of hormonal substances and beta agonists as veterinary medicines. In particular, it forms the legal basis for banning the use of hormonally active substances as growth promoters. Members shared this view.
- 6.12 The proposal has four main elements:
- a) banning the remaining (therapeutic) uses of oestradiol-related substances (oestrogen) in farm animals
  - b) removing the restrictions on using certain hormonal substances in pet animals
  - c) requiring the Commission to gather additional information on other hormonally-active substances and bring forward any new proposals it thinks are necessary
  - d) removing horses from the restrictions on beta agonists, to enable treatments for conditions such as navicular disease (affecting the pedal bone in the hoof) and laminitis (which affects the hoof).

- 6.13 The proposal has been agreed by the Council Working Group and also the European Parliament. We expect it to be formally adopted at the next Council Meeting of EU Agriculture Ministers. Once consolidated text is published in the EU's Official Journal, the VMD will start to transpose it into domestic law.
- 6.14 **Directive 96/23/EC** was the third piece of legislation. This required Member States to carry out surveillance for veterinary residues and sets out very rigidly how this should be done. No proposals have yet come forward from the Commission. The UK would like to see a more risk-based approach to sampling allowed, with Member States having 30% of samples they could allocate to local priorities.

**7. FSA surveys and research on contaminants VRC/08/44**

- 7.1 It was explained that the Committee had asked to be kept up-to-date with the FSA's work in this area. As usual weblinks were included in the paper if more information was required and **AS** offered to put Members in touch with relevant people at the FSA.

**8. Membership of the VRC and its Subgroups VRC/08/45**

- 8.1 **DC** explained that after two terms of four years, government rules required members of expert advisory committees to stand down. A recruitment exercise had been held and new members appointed under the rules of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The names of the new members were in the paper, along with a short biography of each. Five of the new members were able to be present at the meeting
- 8.2 Some parts of the VRC's work are carried out mainly in Subgroups, which make recommendations to the main Committee. As some members of the main Committee would be standing down, there were would be vacancies on some of the Subgroups.
- 8.4 **DC** said that she wished to use the new members to the advantage of the Committee. To this end she had allocated new Members to the Subgroups. These too were noted in the paper. She assured Members she would listen to their wishes of the Members and the Committee would review the memberships after a year.

**9. Presentation by Dr John Webster, Technical Director of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation<sup>1</sup>**

- 9.1 **DC** welcomed Dr John Webster, Technical Director of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation. She said John Webster was the Technical Director of the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation. He was responsible for the SSPO's Research & Development programme, and for all of its other scientific

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<sup>1</sup> The presentation will be posted on the meeting papers section of the VRC website: [www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk](http://www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk).

and technical work, including the residues testing work carried out in support of the industry's EN45011-accredited Product Certification Schemes. Dr Webster gave a presentation on the views of the Scottish salmon farming industry. **DC** thanked him for a most interesting and useful presentation.

## **10. Afternoon Question and Answer Session**

- 10.1 **DC** invited further questions from attendees. **Jon Aaverns** (Port of London), asked about the effect of the RPA proposals in the review of Regulation 2377/90. Different Member States had been taking different approaches to non-compliant consignments of foods. **EC** agreed that there had been inconsistent approaches. This had resulted from the Feed and Food Regulation (882/2004), which had given Member States the choice between destroying or re-dispatching non-compliant consignments of food.
- 10.2 It was asked if there were different approaches in the UK. **AS** commented that whether a consignment could be exported outside the EU would depend on whether a consignment was assessed as being 'injurious to health'. If it is, it should not be re-exported and destroyed. Some 3<sup>rd</sup> countries had asked that non-compliant consignments should be returned to them, to help investigate the reasons for the residues.

## **11. Summary and close**

- 11.1 **DC** thanked all attendees for being such an interesting and interested audience. She indicated that the next Open Meeting would be held in Cardiff in 2009.

## Annex I Attendees at the VRC Open Meeting

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Interest/ Company</b>
1.	Dr Sohail Ashraf	Consultant in Health Protection Cumbria and Lancashire Health Protection Unit
2.	Jon Averbs	London Port Health Authority
3.	Ivan Bartolo	Sea Fish Industry Authority
4.	David Bassett	British Trout Association
5.	Simon Bevis	R-Biopharm Rhone Ltd
6.	Dr Lydia Brown	MD of Pharmaq Ltd, RCVS recognised specialist in Fish Health & production
7.	Dr Gill Clare	Food Safety
8.	Mrs Carol Donnelly	R-Biopharm Rhone Ltd
9.	John Finlay	Aquaservice
10.	Jesus Gallego	Veterinary Advisor, The Scottish Government
11.	Andrew Grant	Fish farming
12.	Jim Grant	British Honey Association
13.	Muhammed Maliki	Technical Agriculture Manager GB Moy Park Ltd
14.	David Ralph	Feed Industry
15.	Prof Michael Roberts	Food Industry
16.	Douglas Scott	Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association
17.	Francoise de Goeijen	DSM Nutritional Products
18.	Philip Lowry	Radox laboratories
19.	Colleen McCoy	Radox laboratories
20.	Ivan McConnell	Radox laboratories