



**Minutes of the 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Veterinary Residues Committee,  
10.15 a.m., Wednesday, 11 March 2009,  
Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Old Library**

**Members present:**

Mrs Dorothy Craig	(Chairman)	DC
Mr Jon Averbs		JA
Mr Tim Brigstocke		TB
Dr Gill Clare		GC
Mr Andrew Grant		AG
Mrs Susan Knox		SK
Mr Stephen Lister		SL
Dr W John McCaughey		WJMcC
Mr Declan O'Rourke		DoR
Dr Shirley Price		SP
Mr David Ralph		DR
Mr Mark Ranson		MR
Prof Mike Roberts		TMR

**Others:**

Mr Eric Crutcher	EC	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Mr David Webb	DW	" " " (Secretariat)
Mrs Sandra Russell	SR	" " "
Mrs Dawn Greener	DG	" " "
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 Rob Pettitt	RP	Animal Health

**Action Points**

4.1.3 To recap the Action Levels that had been recommended by the VRC for certain hormones.

**Action: Secretariat**

5.4 To consider raising the issue of improving feed management practice through the Farm Assurance Schemes and Lantra (Lantra is the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector).

**Action SL and TB**

5.5 To circulate background papers and in particular VRC/05/09 on feed management to explain the background to the work carried out to reduce the incidence of coccidiostats residues in poultry products.

**Action: Secretariat**

- 8.2.1 To keep the Committee updated on the status of the 2009 budget for the Non-Statutory Surveillance Scheme.

**Action: EC**

- 9.2.1 To regularly check the VRC website to ensure it is up-to-date and working correctly.

**Action All members**

- 9.2.2 To check that the facts presented in the biographies on the VRC website were up-to-date.

**Action: all Members**

- 9.3.2 To investigate the possibility of paying the extra costs of having a 'breakfast meeting' as part of the VRC's Open Meeting in Cardiff in October 2009.

**Action: EC**

- 9.3.2 To facilitate an e-mail group with the Secretariat and come forward with a draft program for Open Meeting for consideration at the June meeting.

**Action: SP and Secretariat**

- 9.3.4 To contact the representative organisations for farming and consumers, including the Welsh Consumer Association, and inform them of the VRC's Open Meeting in Cardiff.

**Action: Secretariat and SK**

- 9.3.5 To investigate if there were facilities at the Port of Tilbury that might be used by the VRC for its meeting in June.

**Action: JA and Secretariat**

- 9.3.5 To contact hotels local to the Port of Tilbury to identify costs and options for a possible June meeting there.

**Action: Secretariat**

- 11.3 To investigate which representative organisations of the horse industry and private horse owners should be contacted to promote the messages on the importance of ensuring horses entering the food chain have not received inappropriate Veterinary Medicinal Products.

**Action: Secretariat**

- 14.1 To check the availability of **SK** and **MR** to act as representatives for the UK's Codex liaison meeting on 23 April 2009.

**Action: Secretariat. SK and MR**

## **1. Apologies for absence and attendance**

- 1.1 Sarah Buckley

- 1.2 The Chairman paid tribute to the members who had recently left their position on the Committee. The CEO of the VMD, Steve Dean, had sent official letters

of thanks, the Chairman said she had also sent her personal letters to the ex members whose hard work and support she had appreciated in making the committee work successfully.

- 1.3 The Chairman welcomed the new Members, who were attending their first full meeting. She also welcomed Sandra Russell, who had replaced Maggie Green in managing the VMD's surveillance schemes.

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 It was noted the header on the document said '11 June', this would need to be changed. The minutes were then agreed as a fair and accurate reflection of the meeting.

## 3. Matters arising

- 3.1 The Committee heard that the British Horse Industry Confederation would be a useful contact in promoting the responsible use of medicines. It represented key areas of the horse industry sector.

## 4. Statutory Surveillance Scheme

VRC/09/02

### 4.1 GB Results

- 4.1.1 The **2008 programme** was complete, with just the last few results from the LGC awaited. **SR** highlighted some results:

- Zeranol residues in cattle urine at a concentration of 11 µg/l. The follow-up investigation indicated that this had been the result of fungal contamination of the feed.
- Boldenone residues in cattle urine at a concentration of 17 µg/l was found to be due to faecal contamination of the sample as it was gathered in the field.
- Benzimidazole residues in a sample of cattle liver at a concentration of 14,300 µg/kg. This animal had not completed the withdrawal period for the product.

This was a pulse release bolus that releases active ingredient at regular periods after being administered. These products by their nature have very long Withdrawal Periods, It is possible that the bolus may have just released a pulse of benzimidazole into the animal just before it was slaughtered.

- Phenylbutazone residues found in a sample of horse plasma had been investigated. The vet who had administered the medicine had not entered this information into the passport. Both the owner and the vet had been written to remind them of their responsibilities.
- Nicarbazin residues in broiler liver at a concentration of 3,800 µg/kg had been found to be due to cross-contamination in a single bin

feeding system on the farm. The Animals Medicines Inspectorate had given advice.

4.1.2 The first results of the **2009 programme** had been received. Of particular interest were:

- Dihydrostreptomycin and sulphadiazine residues in a sample of calf kidney at a concentrations of 36,000 µg/kg for dihydrostreptomycin and 3000 µg/kg for sulphadiazine.
- Chlortetracycline residues in a sample of pig's kidney at a concentration of 1,100 µg/kg. The same farm had had residues before so were subject to intensified checks, with carcasses held at the abattoir awaiting analytical results.

4.1.3 **WJMcC** noted that pregnant animals were still being tested leading to positives for nortestosterone. **RP** confirmed that sampling officers were instructed to avoid animals that might be pregnant, but heifers still occasionally prove to be pregnant despite this careful selection and asking the right questions of the owner. It was agreed that the Secretariat would recap the Action Levels that had been recommended by the VRC for certain hormones.

**Action: Secretariat**

4.1.4 **AS** reminded Members that he had agreed to update the Committee on the risk assessment on honey with dichlorobenzene and naphthalene residues that had previously been reported. These chemicals used in the brood chamber to try to control wax moth. They are not authorised for this use.

4.1.5 The risk assessment found that the honey was not necessarily injurious to consumer health. However, it was non-compliant with EU law and so unfit for human consumption. Formal samples were taken for analysis and these confirmed that residues were present. However, when a product recall was instigated, no honey remained with the producer.

## 4.2 **NI Results**

**VRC/08/02a**

4.2.1 The 2008 programme was complete, but no results had been available for the 2009 programme when the paper was prepared. Zeranol residues detected in bovine urine were analysed and subjected to AFBI's statistical model. This indicated that the results were 'suspect'. However, the follow-up investigation had found no evidence of abuse. The animals on the farm would be sampled when they were presented for slaughter.

4.2.2 The Committee heard that an investigation into a phenylbutazone positive in a bovine found a second case on the farm of origin. It was concluded that the two affected cattle had been housed closely together and there had been cross-contamination from some horse feed. The DARD would write to explain the case in the Northern Ireland Veterinary Times.

- 4.2.3 In respect of publicity in GB, **EC** explained that it would be helpful to have a co-ordinated strategy for communicating the requirements of the new European legislation.

## 5. Nicarbazin e-leaflet

VRC/09/03

- 5.1 The nicarbazin leaflet was being widely distributed. It was hoped that managers and farmers would have one on their office walls. The VMD's Animal Medicines Inspectorate will hand out copies when they visited farms and feed mills. It was also available on the FSA website, along with the original report of the joint government / industry initiative:  
<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2009/mar/nicarbazin>.
- 5.2 The Committee advised that to be fully effective, the leaflet may have to be translated into a number of European languages, as much labour on farms is currently recruited on the continent.
- 5.3 The Committee asked why feed spillages had not been included, as these were a source of contamination. Spillage was a potential source of residues, especially after feed was removed, just before poultry sheds were emptied. **AS** indicated the leaflet could be revised at a later stage.
- 5.4 The Committee heard that **TB** had contacts through Lantra<sup>1</sup> with NVQs and this avenue should be pursued to educate those in the industry. He added that the new Broiler Directive requires farm workers to be adequately trained, which was a potential further opportunity to highlight efforts on nicarbazin. The Committee heard that The Animals Medicines Inspectorate would favour a move to strengthen the audit requirement in respect of bin management and recording through the farm assurance scheme.
- Action: SL and TB**
- 5.5 Drivers were seen as key to feed handling on farms. These could be employees or subcontractors, but all needed to know the importance of delivering feed to the correct bins. The drivers' mess rooms should also have copies, as well as managers' offices. The leaflet would also be distributed to feed hauliers through the Trade Assurance Scheme for Combinable Crops (TASCC).
- 5.6 The VRC had worked on this issued for some years. It was thought helpful, particularly for new members, that the background to the issue of feed additives from VRC/05/09 would be circulated.
- Action: Secretariat**

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<sup>1</sup> Lantra is the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector.

**6. Food and Veterinary Office Mission (FVO) on residues VRC/09/04**

6.1 The Committee heard that the FVO was a part of the directorate general concerned with consumer protection and health. It had previously audited the UK's controls on the use of veterinary medicines and residues surveillance in 2002 and 2005. The recent mission, held between 16-23 February, visited two Animal Health Offices and various food-producing businesses. A draft report on the residues Mission was due around 23 March. The Mission was one of ten into various aspects of controls in the UK, which would be amalgamated into an overall assessment. This overall report would not be ready until next year.

6.2 In summary, **EC** said that the overall impression gained by the FVO was favourable. The UK will have 25 working days to respond to the draft report and produce an Action Plan, which will be shared with the Committee.

**7. Tender for analytical services of the National Surveillance Scheme VRC/09/05**

7.1 **JP, MS, DGK** and **TMR** declared an interest in this item.

7.2 The tender was in the early stages, expressions of interest had been received and the VMD would be holding an open day in early April for those expressing an interest. **EC** confirmed the tender would be open to laboratories abroad.

**8. Non-Statutory Scheme VRC/09/06****8.1 Results**

8.1.1 All of the analyses for the 2008 rolling programme had been completed and all of the samples for the survey of poultry liver pâté had been completed. The VMD had also received some feedback over a chloramphenicol residue found in a sample of shrimps from Indonesia. The authorities there reported that the residue had come from skewers used. Monitoring the skewers for chloramphenicol was being tightened. The Committee expressed surprise that skewers were the source of the residues.

**8.2 Funding**

8.2.1 **EC** indicated that the funding could be similar to that of last year, however, this has not been finally set. It was thought that against the very tight government spending round, this would be a very good result, despite the Committee's desire for more money for wider surveillance. The issue of seeking alternative funding for surveillance of imported foodstuffs of animal origin is still being pursued. **EC** agreed to keep the Committee updated on the status of the budget.

**Action: EC**

### 8.3 2008 Brand-Name survey

8.3.1 The Committee had recommended that in 2008 the VMD should carry out a brand-name survey of processed poultry products (such as nuggets and burgers) foods often eaten by children. One hundred samples had been collected and all 97 so far tested for coccidiostats, nitroimidazoles, chloramphenicol and nitrofurans had been compliant. The Committee thought this would be reassuring. It noted the timetable for producing the report of the survey.

### 8.4 Options for a brand-name survey in 2009

8.4.1 The Committee had previously decided that it could recommend one brand-name survey each year where necessary. The paper outlined three options that had been suggested for the 2008 survey. Two had been included as rolling programme surveys and the third, in eggs, was found to be unsuitable. The Committee made suggestions for a 2009 survey and the VMD agreed to assess their suitability in a paper for the June meeting, where a decision would be taken.

**Action: VMD**

8.4.2 Foods and food products that were suggested in discussion were:

- farmed fish
- eggs
- powdered milk
- hog casings
- honey
- crustaceans
- breaded products
- dim sum, shrimp paste or other composite products

## 9. Report of the Communications Subgroup

VRC/09/07

**SP** presented this item. She thanked other members of the Subgroup and the Secretariat for their assistance.

### 9.1 2008 VRC Annual Report

9.1.1 **SP** indicated that the Subgroup had considered the comments that had been received at the Open Meeting. Few changes were required, but additional material on risk assessment, why animals need medicines and the explanation of the new multi-residue methods would be included. However, it was acknowledged that the Committee did not wish the report to get any longer, so some material may need to be moved to the website. The Committee noted the timetable for producing the Annual report, which would be published in early September.

## 9.2 VRC Website

9.2.1 The Subgroup decided to receive reminders from the Secretariat to check the website. The Secretariat had undertaken to obtain information on the usage of the website and to see if a short tick-box survey could be implemented. It was agreed that all members should check the website and provide feedback to the Secretariat.

**Action All members**

9.2.2 The Committee considered the biographies posted on the website, where the biographies of the new Members had been added. It was agreed that all would check that the facts presented were up-to-date.

**Action: all Members**

## 9.3 VRC Open Meeting

9.3.1 The Committee considered the options for the format of the Open Meeting. It was acknowledged that without some discussion of the Committee's business there would be a long gap between the June meeting and the horizon scanning meeting in December. Against this, those new members that attended the previous Open meetings said that listening to the discussions, without having knowledge of the background was not conducive to participation by observers, in spite of having the meeting papers.

9.3.2 There was support for having a 'breakfast meeting' starting at 8 am, with the main meeting starting at 11 am. It might also be possible to have a short meeting on the afternoon preceding the Open Meeting. It was acknowledged that there would be additional costs from these options and **EC** agreed that the Secretariat could look at the costs of this option. **SP** agreed to facilitate an e-mail group with the Secretariat and come forward with a draft programme for the June meeting.

**Action: Secretariat**

**Action: SP and Secretariat**

9.3.3 The Committee noted that the Subgroup had made recommendations for possible locations for up to 2013. These could be added to the Website to inform stakeholders, but could be subject to modification in future.

9.3.4 The Committee stressed the need for more publicity for the Open Meeting and that being in Cardiff, representatives of the devolved government should be invited. The FSA in Wales and the Welsh government policy section with responsibility for veterinary residues had already been contacted. The Welsh CVO was suggested as a useful contact. It might be possible to have advertising material at the major agricultural shows. It was agreed that a number of representative organisations for farming and consumers should be contacted and **SK** would use her contacts to inform the Welsh Consumer Association.

**Action: Secretariat and SK**

9.3.5 Linked to the last Open Meeting, the Committee had made an educational visit to a fish farm in Scotland. It might be possible to visit an abattoir close to Cardiff, but the Committee acknowledged it might be difficult for so many people to be accommodated. An alternative would be to visit the refurbished Tilbury Border Inspection Post in June. This was favoured by a number of Members. While the BIP did not have facilities to host the VRC meeting, **JA** agreed to investigate if there were facilities at the Port that might be used. The Secretariat would investigate local hotels.

**Action: JA and Secretariat**

#### 9.4 Other publicity

9.4.1 The Committee briefly discussed the Consumer Fact Sheet on the controls on the use of veterinary medicines in food-producing animals. This had been based on the research sponsored by NOAH (the animal health industry's representative body) into consumer attitudes to veterinary residues. This research had been repeated and Phil Sketchley of NOAH could give a presentation to the Committee. The Secretariat had received enquiries for copies of the Consumer Factsheet. **MR** thought its contents could be of help to the retail sector, which still encountered the view that hormones were widely used. The Secretariat agreed to send a copy to him. **MR** undertook to keep the Committee informed if he was to use extracts from the factsheet.

**Action: Secretariat**

**Action: MR**

### 10. Update on the review of EU residues legislation

VRC/09/08

10.1 The EU had started its review because while the present legislation had resulted in a high level of consumer protection, it has had the unintended consequence of reducing the availability of veterinary medicines for food-producing species.

10.2 There had been little progress in the legislation since the November meeting. The VMD was in the process of implementing the changes required by the amendment to Directive 96/22/EC (the EU's 'hormones ban'). The replacement to Regulation 2377/90 (assessing substances for consumer safety/MRLs) was close to completion, needing only to be agreed in the European Parliament and published in the Official Journal.

10.3 No proposals had been received to rewrite Directive 96/23/EC (setting the framework for residues surveillance for veterinary medicines and certain other substances). The Committee supported the VMD's view that any new legislation should be far more risk-based.

### 11. Equine identification legislation

VRC/09/10

11.1 The new European legislation would come into force on the 1 July 2009. This was designed to tighten the legislation over the issue of passports, which

should reduce the risk of horses with unacceptable residues entering the food chain. It would do this by requiring all horses to be identified with a unique micro-tag. The animal's unique number, recorded on a database, would show if a passport has been issued. If a duplicate is requested, unless the original can be inspected, the new passport would automatically record that the animal may not enter the food chain.

- 11.2 The Committee agreed that there was still a need to publicise the responsible use of medicines in horses. This is because some residues of a VMP, which should not be used in horses intended for human consumption, are being detected. The horse sector was not part of the normal farming sector and specialist publications and organisations would need to be approached. It was stressed that many people keeping horses did so for only a relatively short period, while their children were active riders, so any messages could need to be repeated at regular intervals.
- 11.3 The British Horse Industry Confederation<sup>2</sup> was suggested as a body that represented all parts of the horse industry sector. It had a Health and Welfare Strategy is that by 2015 all individuals responsible for the health and welfare of equids will possess sufficient knowledge to meet effectively their responsibilities and fulfil the duty of care. It might be possible to promote the responsible use of medicines to the leisure horse sector through this, to ensure VMPs like phenylbutazone are used appropriately. The Pony Club publications could also be used to promote the message. The Secretariat would investigate these avenues with Defra, which has responsibility for implementing the new legislation in England.

**Action: Secretariat**

## **12. FSA's survey and research on contaminants**

**VRC/09/11**

- 12.1 The Committee noted that the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) had stressed the need to reduce dietary exposure to inorganic arsenic and lead. While these were not veterinary medicines, they were substances that could be analysed for within the statutory surveillance scheme.

## **13. The WiGRAMP project – assessing risk from mixtures of chemicals**

- 13.1 **AS** explained that this was a long-running project that had been started following concerns expressed by consumers about mixtures of chemicals. The COT had produced a report in 2002. This had said that the probability of health hazard from mixtures of chemicals was likely to be small, but it acknowledged that the body of evidence was limited at that time.
- 13.2 To address the need for more information, the FSA had sponsored 17 projects; some of which had now reported and other were due before the end

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<sup>2</sup> The British Horse Industry Confederation can be found at: <http://www.bhic.co.uk/>

of 2009<sup>3</sup>. The results so far have supported the COT's original assessment for chemicals with similar modes of action in that no evidence of synergistic effects has been detected.

13.3 **TMR** noted that proposals for legislation were being mooted while the science in this area was far from clear. This was unwise in his view. **DC** agreed that legislation would only be welcome where it is necessary, but consumers would want the precautionary principle to be followed as far as practicable.

13.4 The Committee thanked **AS** for his very clear update and asked to be kept informed of further developments.

#### 14. **AOB**

14.1 The VRC had been approached to provide a representative to the UK's planning meeting for the Codex meeting on 23 April 2009. The Secretariat agreed to check the availability of **SK** and **MR**.

**Action: Secretariat. SK and MR**

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<sup>3</sup> The reports of the FSA's WiGRAMP research can be found at: <http://www.foodbase.org.uk/>