

Joint announcement by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland

**PUBLICATION OF 2008 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
VETERINARY RESIDUES COMMITTEE**

The eighth annual report of the independent Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC) has been published today.

The report summarises the testing of samples of domestic and imported produce for residues of veterinary medicines and other substances. It highlights results of potential concern and it also describes the issues addressed during the year and the Committee's achievements.

Dorothy Craig, chairman of the VRC said:

"The results of surveillance in the UK show that the great majority of our farmers are using veterinary medicines responsibly. There were a small number of residue levels of concern from the use of a particular horse medicine and this underlines the need for all animal keepers to understand and follow the laws on medicines use. The new horse passports regulations will help to tackle such instances and the Committee is in support of this legislation.

The brand-name survey of poultry products for residues of chloramphenicol, coccidiostats, nitroimidazoles and nitrofurans revealed that all 100 samples tested were compliant. The survey targeted products that are often eaten by children such as chicken nuggets and burgers.

The Committee welcomes the development of new multi-residue analytical methods. These have enabled more samples to be tested for a range of substances, adding to the confidence we can have in the results and the assurance we can give to consumers."

The Committee invites interested parties to discuss the VRC Annual Report and the other issues facing the Committee at its 6th Open Meeting on 14 October at the Mercure Holland House Hotel, Cardiff.

To apply for tickets, visit the VRC's website (address below) and click on 'Open Meeting'.

Notes for editors

1. The Annual Report can be viewed on the VPC and VMD websites at: <http://www.vet-residues-committee.com>. Printed copies of the report are also available, free of charge, from Isabel Sharma at the VMD (VRC Secretariat) telephone: 01932 338330 or by e-mail on i.sharma@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk.

2. The Veterinary Residues Committee was set up in January 2001 with an independent membership. Mrs Dorothy Craig MBE is the chairman. More information can be found on its website: [http://www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk./](http://www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk/)

3. The Committee provides advice to Ministers and the Chief Executives of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and Food Standards Agency on the incidence and concentrations of residues of veterinary medicines in samples collected under the VMD's surveillance programmes. Its terms of reference are:

To advise Ministers¹ (where appropriate) and the Chief Executives of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on:

- the incidence and concentrations of residues of veterinary medicines² in samples collected under the VMD's surveillance programmes, with particular reference to food safety and observance of withdrawal periods for veterinary medicines;³
- to assess and advise on the scope and operation of the VMD statutory surveillance programme within the requirements of European Community legislation;
- to formulate an annual non-statutory surveillance programme, advise on the scope and results of relevant FSA surveys and consider the need for further analytical surveys; and
- to set up subgroups as necessary to further the work and objectives of the VRC.
- To publish an Annual Report on Veterinary Residues Surveillance, and to communicate the VRC's findings and recommendations to Government and stakeholders in a comprehensive, understandable and timely way.

¹ The Ministers referred to are:
The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministers of the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland.

² In addition to veterinary medicines, surveillance also covers banned substances, heavy metals (lead and cadmium), malachite green, organochlorines (OCs), organophosphates (OPs), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

³ A withdrawal period is the length of time after the end of treatment with a veterinary medicine that must pass so that any residues in edible tissues will have depleted to below the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL).

4. All surveillance results and analyses undertaken for 2008 are published in the VMD's quarterly electronic magazine, "Medicines Act Veterinary Information Service", available on the VMD's website (www.vmd.gov.uk). The results of the VRC's brand-name survey of poultry products for residues of chloramphenicol, coccidiostats, nitroimidazoles and nitrofurans can be found at:

http://www.vet-residues-committee.gov.uk/Reports/Brand_naming_report_2008.pdf