

## GUIDELINES

# Responsible use of antimicrobials in dairy and beef cattle production

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) was established in November 1997 to promote the highest standards of food safety, animal health and animal welfare in British livestock farming.

A unique initiative involving organisations representing every stage of the food chain. RUMA aims to produce a co-ordinated and integrated approach to best practice in the use of medicines.

The guidelines assume that the antimicrobial substances available are officially authorised for the purpose for which they are used and that they are lawfully obtained.

Produced by the Cattle Working Group of the **RUMA Alliance**

September 2004

*This booklet summarises the farmer's responsibility as part of the RUMA guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in dairy and beef cattle production.*

Antimicrobials have made a major contribution to cattle health and welfare. They are vital medicines for the treatment of bacterial infections in cattle.

The emergence of antimicrobial resistance as a serious problem in human medicine has prompted concerns about the potential for crossover of resistant bacteria from livestock to the human population and the associated possibility of this impacting on the effectiveness of medical antimicrobial treatments.

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) is a coalition of organisations including agricultural, veterinary, pharmaceutical, retail and consumer interests. It has been set up to review the use of medicines in livestock and to establish practical strategies to reduce the need to use antimicrobials.

To meet this end, RUMA has produced a comprehensive set of guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in livestock production. These give advice on all aspects from application and responsibilities of farmers and veterinary surgeons, to strategies for reducing the need for usage. **This booklet summarises responsibilities of dairy and beef farmers. Similar guidelines form part of farm assurance schemes.**

# For Farmers

The use of animal medicines carries with it responsibilities. Under UK legislation, all antimicrobials are licensed for specific species and uses.

A product will not be authorised unless very stringent requirements are met. The use of therapeutic antimicrobials is under the direct responsibility of veterinary surgeons.

Farmers, however, have a very considerable role to play in ensuring that the directions of the veterinary surgeon are properly carried out and also in developing and applying disease control measures which minimise the need for antimicrobial use.

## THE GUIDELINES

- There is a joint responsibility between the veterinary surgeon and the farmer to ensure that antimicrobials are used correctly and for the right reason. Ultimately, it is the farmer who is responsible for ensuring that animal medicines are used in a safe, responsible and effective way on the farm.
- Dairy and beef farmers are committed to ensuring the safety of food they produce for consumers.
- Farmers have a responsibility to safeguard the health of the animals on their farm.
- Therapeutic antimicrobial products should be regarded as complementing good management and farm hygiene. Herd health plans should be drawn up and include routine preventative treatments (e.g. routine foot care, mastitis, vaccination and worming).
- Treatment should be initiated with a medicine that is subject to veterinary prescription only with formal veterinary approval. Accurate information, including other medicines being administered, should be given to the veterinary surgeon to allow correct diagnosis and appropriate medication and dosage. Clear instructions must be left on the farm and made available to all staff responsible.
- The full course of treatment at the correct dosage should always be administered.
- The appropriate withdrawal period prior to slaughter, or for the sale of milk for human consumption, must be ensured. Information on the required withdrawal period can be found on the medicine labels.

- An animal medicines record book together with copies of relevant regulations and Codes of Practice must be kept on the farm.
- Accurately record the identity of the treated animals, the batch number, amount and expiry date of the medicine used, plus the required withdrawal period and the time and date the medication was completed for any specific animal. Appropriate information should be kept on file of medicines used (e.g. product data sheets, package inserts or safety data sheets). Records must be kept for a period of five years after the treatment has ended even if the animal has been slaughtered.
- Medicines must be stored according to the manufacturers' instructions. Unused or unwanted medicines must be disposed of according to manufacturers' instructions or returned to the veterinary surgeon or supplier for safe disposal.
- Any suspected adverse reactions in either the animals undergoing treatment or the staff treating them, should be reported to the Veterinary Medicines directorate (VMD). Adverse reaction forms can be found on the VMD's website at [www.vmd.gov.uk](http://www.vmd.gov.uk). A report can be submitted by the farmer or the attending veterinary surgeon. Keep a note in the medicines book or a copy of the VMD adverse reaction report if available.
- Cooperate with Farm Assurance Schemes that monitor medication and withdrawal compliance. However, such schemes should not constrain the farmer from preventing the suffering of animals.
- Work with the veterinary surgeon in monitoring the potency of antimicrobial use.

**Dr Tony Andrews**

**RUMA**

**Acorn House  
25 Mardley Hill  
Welwyn  
Hertfordshire  
AL6 0TT**

**Tel/Fax: 01438 717900**

**Email: [info@ruma.org.uk](mailto:info@ruma.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.ruma.org.uk](http://www.ruma.org.uk)**

**RUMA is made up of the following organisations:**

*Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)*

*Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA)*

*Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA)*

*British Association of Feed Supplement & Additive Manufacturers (BAFSAM)*

*British Poultry Council (BPC)*

*British Retail Consortium (BRC)*

*British Veterinary Association (BVA)*

*Linking Environment & Farming (LEAF)*

*Meat & Livestock Commission (MLC)*

*National Beef Association (NBA)*

*National Consumer Council (NCC)*

*National Farmers' Union (NFU)*

*National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)*

*National Pig Association (NPA)*

*NPTC (National Proficiency Tests Council)*

*National Sheep Association (NSA)*

*Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RABDF)*

*Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB (RPSGB)*

*Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)*