

Responsible use of antimicrobials in fish 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 Fish Working Group of the **RUMA Alliance**

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This booklet summarises the Farmer Responsibilities section of the RUMA guidelines to provide quick and easy-to-read guiding principles for fish producers.

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

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), a coalition of organisations including agricultural, veterinary, pharmaceutical, retail and consumer interests, has been set up to address these concerns. It aims to review the use of antimicrobials and to establish practical strategies to enable farmers, including fish farmers, to reduce the need for their use.

To this end, RUMA has formulated comprehensive guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in fish production. These give advice on all aspects from application and responsibilities of the farmer, feed manufacturer and veterinary surgeon, to strategies for reducing the need for usage. **This booklet summarises the Farmer Responsibilities section of the guidelines.**

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

- Regard therapeutic antimicrobial products as complementary to good management, vaccination and general site and farm hygiene.
- A site and farm health plan should be drawn up that outlines routine preventative treatments (for example vaccination, fungus control, salmon lice control etc.). Delay in initiating therapy causes welfare problems and may ultimately lead to increased medicine usage.
- Initiate treatment with an antimicrobial medicine, all of which are subject to a veterinary prescription, only with formal veterinary approval.
- In the case of in-feed medication this will be provided by a Medicated Feedingstuff (MFS) Prescription.
- Ensure that accurate information is given to the attending veterinary surgeon in order that the correct dosage can be calculated for the fish concerned, and ensure that clear instructions for medication, dosage and administration are obtained and passed on where necessary to the staff responsible.
- Always complete the course of treatment at the correct dosage. Ensure that the dosage is dispensed in an effective manner by careful administration.
- Ensure the end of medication is accurately determined by cleaning the feed bin or hopper as appropriate.
- Ensure that the appropriate withdrawal period is complied with prior to slaughter of the treated fish for human consumption. In general the withdrawal time is specified on the Medicated Feedingstuff Prescription or as set by the veterinary surgeon.

- Maintain a fish medicines record book on farm together with copies of relevant regulations and Codes of Practice.
- Accurately record the identity of the fish medicated, the batch number, amount and expiry of the medicine used, the withdrawal period required and the date the medication was completed.
- For all medicines used, appropriate information should be kept on file – for example, product data sheets, package inserts or safety data sheets as available.
- Report to the veterinary surgeon, the supplier, or direct to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate any suspected adverse reaction to a medicine in either the treated fish or farm staff having contact with the medicine. A record of the adverse reaction should also be kept on the farm: either a copy of the VMD adverse reaction form or a note in the medicine record book.
- Co-operate with Farm Assurance schemes which monitor antimicrobial usage, medication documentation and withdrawal period compliance. However, such schemes should not constrain the attending veterinary surgeon or farmer from preventing suffering of fish stocks.
- With your veterinary surgeon monitor antimicrobial usage taking account of the potency of various products.
- Ensure that different medicines are only given at the same time with the specific approval of the veterinary surgeon to prevent the possibility of adverse interactions.

Dr Tony Andrews
RUMA
Acorn House
25 Mardley Hill
Welwyn
Hertfordshire
AL6 0TT

Tel/Fax: 01438 717900
Email: info@ruma.org.uk
Website: 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)