

GUIDELINES

Responsible use of antimicrobials in poultry 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 promote a co-ordinated and integrated approach to best practice in the use of medicines.

RUMA membership spans the food chain and includes organisations representing interests in agriculture, veterinary practice, the pharmaceutical industry, retail, consumers and animal welfare interests.

In order for medicines to be used responsibly they must be lawfully obtained and used in accordance with the label directions or veterinary advice.

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

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This booklet summarises the farmer's responsibility as part of the RUMA guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in poultry production. They provide quick and easy-to-read guiding principles for poultry producers.

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

The emergence of antimicrobial resistance as a serious problem in human medicine has prompted concerns that a crossover of resistance or resistant bacteria from livestock could take place into the human population (and vice versa). If this occurred the effectiveness of some medical antimicrobial treatments could be compromised.

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) is a growing coalition of organisations representing every stage of the "farm to fork" process. It has been set up to review and provide guidance on the use of medicines in all livestock. As part of this work RUMA has established practical strategies to reduce the need to use antimicrobials, where appropriate.

To communicate these strategies effectively to the industry RUMA has produced a comprehensive set of guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in poultry and other livestock production. These give advice on aspects from application and use, to responsibilities of farmers and veterinarians, to strategies for reducing the need for usage. **This booklet summarises the responsibilities of poultry farmers.**

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

Under the RUMA guidelines, poultry farmers must:

- Regard therapeutic antimicrobials as complementing good management practice, vaccination programmes, and site hygiene.
- Draw up a flock health plan that outlines routine preventative treatments (eg biosecurity, vaccination and worming programmes etc), health monitoring and contact details for the veterinary practice under whose care the birds are placed.
- Store antimicrobial medicines securely in their original container, in a dry place at less than 25°C, (or as directed on the label) protected from sunlight, and use them before expiry. For multi-dose vials, once opened, products must be used or disposed of within the time specified on the label.
- Initiate medication only with formal veterinary approval. This may be by a written direction or, if necessary, a verbal direction from a veterinarian under whose care the poultry are placed, or a treatment programme or protocol previously approved by the veterinarian.
- Obtain a Medicated Feedingstuffs (MFS) Prescription for in-feed medication.
- Ensure that accurate information is given to the veterinarian in order that the correct dosage can be calculated for the birds concerned, and ensure that clear instructions for 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 consumed in an effective manner by careful administration.
- Accurately record the identity of the birds medicated, the batch number, amount and expiry of the medicine used, the withdrawal period required and the date and time the medication was completed.

- For in-feed or in-water medication ensure that the end of medication is accurately determined by cleaning the header tank or feed bin as appropriate.
- For any medicines used, ensure a copy of the package insert and the safety data sheet is readily available to staff and kept on file.
- Follow the advice of manufacturers and regulatory bodies on the storage of medicines and the disposal of unused medicines (check the label or package insert). Safely dispose of unused or out-of-date medicines and containers and application equipment (including needles to a sharps container) when you finish the treatment for which they were intended. If in any doubt seek advice from your veterinary surgeon or whoever supplied the product. Follow RPSGB guidelines on remixing or reworking of batches of medicated feed.
- Report to the veterinarian or direct to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, any suspicion of an adverse reaction to the medicine in either the treated animals or farm staff having contact with the medicine. This should include any unusual failure to respond to medication. A record of the adverse reaction should also be kept on the farm, either a copy of the green form report or a note in the medicines record book. Adverse reaction forms can be found on the VMD website www.vmd.gov.uk
- Ensure that the appropriate withdrawal period is complied with prior to the sale or collection of the treated birds or eggs for human consumption. In general the withdrawal time required is specified on the MFS prescription or prescription.
- If it is necessary for a product to be prescribed for a species for which it is not licensed or at a dosage higher than the licensed dosage, the veterinarian will specify an appropriate withdrawal period. This must be complied with to ensure that food produced from the treated animals does not contain residues harmful to consumers.

- Co-operate with Farm Assurance schemes which monitor antimicrobial usage, medication documentation, and withdrawal period compliance. However such schemes should not constrain the attending veterinarian from preventing suffering in the animals under his care.
- Ensure that different medicines are only given at the same time when this is with the specified approval of the veterinarian because adverse interactions sometimes occur.
- Maintain a medicines log book on farm together with copies of relevant regulations and Codes of Practice.

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RUMA is made up of the following organisations:

Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)

Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA)

Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA)

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 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)