

Responsible use of antimicrobials in poultry and game production

RUMA guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials by poultry and game farmers have been designed to provide quick and easy-to read guiding principles that can be used by poultry and game producers.

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

The emergence of antimicrobial resistance as a serious problem in human medicine has prompted concerns that resistance or resistant bacteria could be transferred from livestock to the human population (and vice versa). The effectiveness of some human antimicrobial treatments might be compromised if this occurred.

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) is a coalition of organisations representing every stage of the "farm to fork" process. RUMA seeks to establish practical strategies to enable farmers to reduce the need to use antimicrobials in animal production, and provides guidance on the responsible use of antimicrobials where a veterinary surgeon has directed that they are needed to safeguard the health and welfare of the animals.

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

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To communicate these strategies effectively to the industry RUMA has produced comprehensive guidelines for the responsible use of antimicrobials in poultry, game and other livestock. **These Guidelines summarise the responsibilities of poultry and game producers, give advice on strategies to reduce the need for usage and, where necessary, how to use antimicrobials responsibly to safeguard the health and welfare of their animals.**

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 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 in developing and applying disease control measures which minimise the need for antimicrobial use.

*"Farmers" includes all those on farm involved in looking after the animals e.g. stock-keepers

THE GUIDELINES

All farmers have a legal responsibility for the health and welfare of the animals on their farm. Farmers and their veterinary surgeons have joint responsibility to ensure that all medicines used on their farm, including antimicrobials, are used correctly, responsibly and appropriately. Farmers and stock-keepers can play a major role in ensuring the responsible use of antimicrobials on farms by following the guidelines published here. Similar guidelines form part of most farm assurance schemes.

- All poultry and game producers must be totally committed to producing safe food.
- Poultry and game producers have a legal responsibility to safeguard the health and welfare of animals on their farm.
- Poultry and game producers should manage their farm to reduce the risk of disease challenge and, therefore, the need to use antimicrobials and other medicines.
- Draw up, implement and regularly review an appropriate flock health plan that outlines routine preventive treatments (e.g. biosecurity, vaccination and worming programmes etc.) and disease control policy, in association with the attending veterinary surgeon.
- Follow the Four Golden Rules on Disease Control in the table on page 6.
- Antimicrobial use should not be used simply to prop up poor husbandry or failing management systems. Where required, antimicrobials should be viewed as an acceptable veterinary treatment complementing good management, good nutrition, vaccination, biosecurity and farm hygiene.
- Treatment with a medicine that requires a veterinary prescription should only be initiated with formal veterinary approval. In-feed medication must be covered by a Medicated Feedingstuff (MFS) Prescription.

- Accurate information must be given to the attending veterinary surgeon to ensure that the correct diagnosis, medication and dosage can be calculated.
- Clear instructions regarding diagnosis, medication, dosage and administration must be made available by the veterinary surgeon in written form to all who are involved in the care of the animals concerned.
- The prescribing veterinary surgeon must be made aware if other medicines are being administered to the animals concerned so that adverse reactions or interactions can be avoided.
- If use of a competitive exclusion product, live bacterial vaccine or microbiological sampling is planned (e.g. National Control Plan Salmonella testing), consult the attending veterinary surgeon with respect to the appropriate intervals to be followed.
- Don't be surprised if the attending veterinary surgeon wants to take samples as these can be used as an aid to diagnosis and to assist in selecting the correct medicine to treat your animals. In all cases where appropriate, the veterinary surgeon will want to undertake culture and sensitivity testing to support antimicrobial selection.
- Flocks should be inspected regularly. If obviously sick or lame birds are identified these should be culled immediately and humanely. If sick birds are considered to be likely to recover with appropriate treatment, rest or isolation they may be removed to a well littered, low stocked hospital pen and be closely monitored for signs of recovery.
- Do not borrow medicines or move them between farms or groups of animals on a farm. Antimicrobials are prescribed for a specific site, species and population.
- Do not use illegally obtained medicines.
- Medicines should not be mixed before administration without the approval of your veterinary surgeon. Mixing may result in damage to the active ingredient or result in

unforeseen adverse reactions or interactions, which could have serious consequences for the animals and the consumer. This consideration includes the mixing of antimicrobials with vitamins, disinfectants or other drinking water treatments.

- Do not administer two or more antimicrobials concurrently unless specifically advised by your veterinary surgeon.
- The full course of treatment at the correct dosage must always be calculated and administered in a careful manner having accurately determined the weight of the animals to be treated. Make sure that only target animals receive the medication.
- For in-feed or in-water medication ensure that the end of medication is accurately defined. Thoroughly clean/flush equipment e.g. header tank and pipes, feed bin and auger lines to ensure no medicine residues are retained in the equipment.
- Make sure that the appropriate withdrawal period is complied with before the slaughter of treated animals or the use of eggs for human consumption. The withdrawal time required should be specified on the Medicated Feedingstuff Prescription in the case of in-feed antimicrobials; or on the label of the medicine; or may be set by the veterinary surgeon. The withdrawal period stated on the SPC/label is a minimum required. Be aware that if medicines are used with any variation from the label, including altered dose rates, or use in a different species, then a meat withdrawal time of at least 28 days, and an egg withdrawal time of at least 7 days automatically applies. In some circumstances, the veterinary surgeon may impose longer withdrawal times.
- An animal medicines record book/on-line record, copies of relevant regulations and Codes of Practice must be readily accessible on farm (see for example the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) Code of Practice on the Responsible Use of Animal Medicines on the Farm available at www.vmd.defra.gov.uk).

- Accurate information recording the identity of the treated animals and the nature of the condition being treated must be kept. Records should also include the batch number, amount and expiry date of the medicine used, plus treatment time and date information for each group of animals treated and the withdrawal period that must be observed. Medicine records are required by legislation to be kept for at least five years from the time of use (even if the animals in question have been slaughtered).
- Appropriate information on all medicines used should be readily available to stock-keepers and kept on file e.g. product data sheets, package inserts or safety data (COSHH) sheets.
- Follow the manufacturers' advice 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. It may be possible to return unused medicines to the prescribing veterinary surgeon or supplier for disposal. Follow Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) guidelines and veterinary advice on remixing or reworking of batches of medicated feed.
- Any suspected adverse reaction to a medicine in either the treated animals (including any unusual failure to respond to medication) or farm staff having contact with the medicine should be reported immediately to the VMD and the supplier. The adverse reaction can be reported directly to the VMD by the farmer or through the prescribing veterinary surgeon or the supplier. Adverse reaction forms can be found on the VMD's website www.vmd.defra.gov.uk. 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 medicines record book.
- Co-operate with and observe the rules of farm assurance schemes that monitor medication and withdrawal period compliance.

- Working with the attending veterinary surgeon, regularly collate, record, review and discuss antimicrobial use and monitor the effectiveness of antimicrobials used.
- Regularly investigate, with your veterinary surgeon the possibility of alternatives (particularly through changes to management techniques or vaccination) to see if they can offer the same level of protection of health and welfare and thus reduce the use of antimicrobials.
- Animal keepers and stockmen should have the appropriate levels of husbandry skills and knowledge to provide appropriate standards of care for the animals e.g. appropriate knowledge of water dosing systems, system volumes and daily intakes. Good recording regimes monitoring the health of the animals should be adopted throughout the farm system with regular management input from the farm veterinary surgeon. The overall aim should be to maximise animal health and welfare through good management protocols, resulting in antimicrobials being used as little as possible but as much as necessary.

Disease Control: Four Golden rules		
Rule 1	Biosecurity.	Disease spreads onto and around a farm by contamination, usually by faeces or dust. Limit this contamination and you will help to limit the prevalence of disease. REMEMBER this contamination can be INDIRECT by water systems, equipment, vehicles, other animals or people. Don't spread disease by sharing equipment or personnel.
Rule 2	"Stress" is a killer.	Stressed animals are far more likely to become diseased. This includes not only obvious physical stress factors e.g. overcrowding, chilling; but also exposure to micro-organisms which cause major stress to the immune system. THINK - If a procedure causes the birds to become stressed, ask "can this be done in a less stressful manner?"
Rule 3	Good Hygiene	There is no substitute for good hygiene. Cleaning and disinfecting buildings and equipment, including water and feeding systems, coupled with good personal hygiene will all make a difference. Don't be complacent about areas outside of the birds' living area.
Rule 4	Good Nutrition	Balanced diets with adequate levels of trace elements, minerals, vitamins and anti-oxidants are essential if the immune system of birds is to work properly in tackling diseases.

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 "farm to fork" process, RUMA aims to promote a co-ordinated and integrated approach to best practice. RUMA membership spans the livestock industry and includes organisations representing interests in agriculture, veterinary practice, the pharmaceutical industry, retail, consumers and animal welfare interests.

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RUMA is made up of the following organisations:

Agricultural Industries Confederation (A IC)

Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA)

Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority (AMTRA)

Assured Food Standards (AFS) better known as Red Tractor Assurance BPEX and EBLEX

British Egg Industry Council (BEIC)

British Poultry Council (BPC)

British Retail Consortium (BRC)

British Veterinary Association (BVA)

City and Guilds Land Based Services

Dairy Co

Dairy UK

Game Farmers' Association (GFA)

Linking Environment & Farming (LEAF)

National Beef Association (NBA)

National Farmers' Union (NFU)

National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)

National Pig Association (NPA)

National Sheep Association (NSA)

NFU Scotland (NFUS)

Royal Association of British Dairy

Farmers (RABDF)

Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS)

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