

English Pharmacy Board 16 April 2008

**PUBLIC BUSINESS****Veterinary Pharmacy in the new millennium****Rob Morris MRPharmS, DipAgVetPharm, DipM, MBA**

Pharmacy has a long history in the supply of medicines to animal owners but in recent times the vet and pet shop have been the main source of supply for commonly used pet health products. This could be about to change if community pharmacists consider, and then grasp, the opportunity presented to them by the re-classification of many POM(V) (vet only) prophylactic products to effectively a "P" category in pharmacies.

Animal medicines are now the sole responsibility of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and classifications are slightly different to the human medicines we are used to dealing with. For many pet medicines a category called NFA-VPS (non-food animal, vet, pharmacist and merchant) exists which means sales are restricted in the same way as "P" medicines are in a pharmacy. Whilst pet shops are allowed to sell them, their staff should be appropriately trained to offer advice and guidance on use, and the products kept away from self-selection – often in locked rooms or cabinets. Community pharmacists are also allowed to sell such medicines and observe a similar code of practice when supplying them – keeping them away from free sale and offering suitable advice from trained staff. In other words what we do every day with P medicines!

The NFA-VPS products we are talking about here are mainly used for prevention and treatment of common parasite problems in dogs and cats – fleas and worms to you and I! Many of these medicines have only been available from vets until recently with strong recognisable brand names (**Frontline**, **Drontal** etc) that make up a retail category valued at over £100 million. This is considerably larger than many traditional OTC human medicines so it really is worth pharmacists getting involved.

**The Pet medicines market**

The market for pet medicines is very large with over half of UK households owning at least one pet. There are 8 million cats, 7 million dogs, 2.5 million caged birds, 18 million aquarium fish, 850,000 horses and 10million pigeons! Millions of these pets never see a vet, or at least only when they are ill. Similarly, millions of pets never get regular health checks. Many of these pet owners are not using any medicines at all and they may not trust the pet shop and be reluctant to go to the vet, so they are not receiving any advice from a health care professional. Only half Of the 8 million cats in the UK are being wormed and very few are being wormed four times a year as recommended on the label. This ratio also applies to dog wormers & flea control products. The owners of these untreated pets are unlikely to visit a vet for routine treatments – they are far more likely to visit pharmacies, so there is a huge opportunity to grow the market

**A few more statistics to consider...**

- 65% of households with children have a pet
- 500,000 pet owners visit a pharmacy every day
- Only 750 non-specialist pharmacies sell animal medicines
- Companion animal health market alone is £180 million - Pharmacy share <5%
- OFT has opened up the veterinary market – reclassification of products & easier access to vet meds. A few years ago there was a veterinary cartel over POM medicines with vet wholesalers refusing to supply pharmacists

## What can Pharmacists do?

- Dispense POM-V prescriptions from a Vet. But sitting back & waiting for veterinary scripts to come in is not a good strategy!
- Sell NFA-VPS and AVM-GSL medicines to pet & horse owners. All community pharmacists have potential here – especially dogs & cats
- Prescribe & Dispense POM-VPS medicines for livestock (VPS = ....)
  - Anthelmintics, vaccines, Specialist area
  - May suit some enthusiastic rural pharmacists who are
  - This could compensate for a dispensing shortfall due to disp drs

## The areas pharmacists can help are:

- Routine prophylactic treatment of internal & external parasites
- Advice on improving hygiene & issues about zoonoses & public health (In the USA – 3-6M people infected with roundworm = 1:50).
- Guidance on dosage & administration
- Referral to Vets when necessary

## What are the Obstacles?

- Pharmacy is not recognised as a source of veterinary medicines & advice
- Pharmacists' lack of interest & confidence?
- Pharmacists' lack of knowledge & training
- Veterinary Pharmacy needs to be part of the undergraduate course
- For post Grad Training – RPSGB *Veterinary Pharmacy Education Programme*  
[www.vpep.net](http://www.vpep.net)
  - Certificate in Companion Animal Health care
  - Certificate in Livestock Health care
  - Diploma in Veterinary Pharmacy
- NPA resource pack
- NOAH online compendium [www.noahcompendium.co.uk](http://www.noahcompendium.co.uk)
- We need the Veterinary Pharmaceutical Manufacturers (NOAH members) to support Pharmacy

## The Future

- Improve knowledge of Vet Med through undergraduate course & post grad training
- Establish as a core part of pharmacists' skill
- Work with Vets to improve access to veterinary medicines – needs involvement of manufacturers to fund margin distribution
- Work with vets – refer animals to them, receive scripts etc
- Make animal owners recognise the benefits of regular treatments

## Rob Morris

Graduated in 1976 and spent two years in retail. Moved in to ag and vet pharmacy dealing with farm medicines and then to Hoechst as a sales/marketing person. Joined Intervet (the largest veterinary manufacturer) in 1994 and performed various roles within marketing/business for medicines/vaccines across all species sectors – including poultry!

Currently a consultant for the veterinary industry and partner in own community pharmacy business in Northants. Chair of Northants LPC and former PEC member of Northampton PCT.