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AHDA welcomes introduction of Northern Ireland Protocol Bill

The Animal Health Distributors Association has today outlined its support for the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill introduced to parliament on 13th June, describing it as a ‘positive move’ for the supply of veterinary medicines.

In the Bill, veterinary medicines are covered under ‘manufactured goods, medicines and agri-foods’ in the regulation of goods clauses 7-11. For the veterinary medicines industry, the Bill will provide the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) with the powers to disapply elements of EU law under the Protocol, such as those relating to the EU rules on veterinary medicines.

The Bill also provides the power for Ministers to make new law in connection with the Protocol, which could be used to create a UK-wide veterinary regime. This would remove regulatory barriers and supply challenges that will arise should the grace period end at the end of this year.

The Animal Health Distributors Association (UK) Ltd (AHDA) is an association drawn from companies that sell and prescribe animal health products and POM -VPS products, veterinary medicine producers and animal health equipment manufacturers. Together, approximately 300 members, including businesses in Northern Ireland, account for over 80% of POM – VPS animal prescription only medicines sold in the UK.

In 2018, following a lengthy and costly battle, AHDA successfully campaigned to retain the right of SQPs to prescribe veterinary medicines across the UK. This was achieved by getting a derogation included in the EU veterinary medicine regulations that secured this vital legally binding regulation that will remain compliant with both UK and EU law post-Brexit.

“The Northern Ireland Protocol, as it stands, undermines the right of SQPS/RAMAs to prescribe veterinary medicines in the UK, and the way that Northern Ireland operates,” explains Bryan Lovegrove, AHDA Secretary General.

“Northern Ireland is a part of the UK, meaning that Northern Ireland veterinary medicines fall under the responsibility of the VMD as a part of UK Government. Northern Ireland must therefore not be treated any differently in respect of the governance of veterinary medicine products,” he adds.

“AHDA fully endorses this Bill going through parliament. The Bill is a very positive move for the veterinary medicines industry, and AHDA hopes the proposed changes will be made permanent.”

The introduction of the protocol, which was negotiated between the UK and EU as part of the Withdrawal Agreement, caused many practical issues, including trade disruption and diversion, and significant costs and bureaucracy for those supplying and trading animal medicines.

“There is real concern that over half of the current veterinary medicine products will not be available from the 1st of January 2023 if the current proposals within the Northern Ireland Protocol are allowed to stay in place, which would be catastrophic for the industry,” says Mr Lovegrove.

PRESS RELEASE



“This would have a severe impact on the health and welfare of animals in Northern Ireland and its ability to trade. Specifically, the botulism vaccine is an existing concern to DAERA, and the salmonella vaccine is vital for the continuation of Northern Ireland egg trade.”

Examples of products likely to be withdrawn under the protocol include anthelmintics, hormones, vitamins and minerals, as well as some classes of antibiotics, anti-inflammatory drugs and bacterial and viral vaccines.

The VMD would like to reach a negotiated arrangement with the EU on veterinary medicines. If this is not possible, the Bill will provide the VMD with the powers to ensure continuity of supply of veterinary medicines throughout the UK.

In the short-term, there will be no changes as the Bill may take up to 12-months to go through the parliamentary approval process and gain Royal Assent. If the Bill is not passed by the end of 2022, the UK will consider further measures to protect the supply of veterinary medicines in NI.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

Founded in 1985, the Animal Health Distributors Association (AHDA) represents approx. 300 companies across the farm animal, companion animal and equine sectors.

Membership of AHDA is drawn primarily from animal health product retail distributors across the UK, as well as veterinary medicine producers and animal health equipment manufacturers, and represents over 80% of the POM-VPS (Prescription Only Medicine – Vet, Pharmacist and SQP) and NFAVPS (Non Food Animal –Vet, Pharmacist, SQP) UK animal medicines market.

AHDA members employ the majority of Registered Animal Medicine Advisors - RAMAs (SQPs). The overriding mission and purpose of AHDA is to support RAMAs (SQPs) in their role, working with other industry organisations and bodies to protect their right to sell and supply the range of prescription animal medicines not requiring veterinary diagnosis.

AHDA has a board member place on the following:

- Responsible Use of Medicine in agriculture Alliance – RUMA
- Animal Medicine Regulatory Authority – AMTRA

AHDA is represented on the following bodies:

- Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep – SCOPS
- Control of Worms Sustainably – COWS
- Ruminant Health and Welfare Group – RHWG

For more information:

Juliette McDaniel, Kendalls PR & Marketing
juliette.mcdaniel@kendallspr.co.uk | 07833 777518

Bryan Lovegrove, AHDA Secretary General
bryan@ahda.co.uk | 01664 822335