



## ACQUIRING VETERINARY MEDICINES ONLINE

### Purchasing animal treatments online?

Are you interested in acquiring pet medicines, livestock or horse medicines via the internet? If you are, you need to be aware of the laws that govern the supply of these products.

### The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority and the Agvet Code

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the Australian statutory authority responsible for the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemical products. The APVMA assesses every veterinary medicine proposed for supply in Australia. It conducts scientific risk assessments to ensure that veterinary medicines are effective and can be safely used without adversely impacting on people, animals, the environment and trade. Only those veterinary medicines that satisfy these requirements are registered and provided with label approval. The label specifies how the product can be used.

The APVMA administers the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994* (the Agvet Code). Under this legislation, it is an offence to advertise or supply unregistered veterinary medicines or to manufacture veterinary medicines without an appropriate licence. These offences carry fines of up to \$51 000 for an individual or \$255 000 for a company.

### What chemical products are covered by the Agvet Code?

Both veterinary medicines and agricultural chemical products are covered by the Code. The Code defines a veterinary medicine as any substance or mixture of substances which is claimed to prevent, cure, alleviate a condition in an animal, treat a wound on an animal or prevent an infestation of an animal by a pest or parasite.

Veterinary medicines typically supplied by a pet store that would be captured by this definition include:

- Flea, tick, lice and mange preparations including collars, powders, sprays and shampoos
- Vitamin and mineral supplements that claim to treat a condition or deficiency
- Worming treatments
- Wound treatments
- Products intended to calm animals or modify their behaviour in any way
- Joint, tendon and antibacterial treatments
- Medicated pet foods.

### How do I know if a product is APVMA registered?

When the APVMA registers a veterinary medicine, an approval number is placed on the product label. The APVMA was previously known as the National Registration Authority (NRA) with some labels still reflecting this name.

The approval number is typically found at the base of the rear label on the main container. The approval number contains the product number, the pack size identifier and the month and year of initial registration. Typical examples are:

- APVMA Approval No. 54321 / 1kg / 0909
- NRA 54321 / 1kg / 0909.

If a product label does not have an APVMA or NRA approval number, the product may not be registered.

The APVMA website

([www.apvma.gov.au/products/databases](http://www.apvma.gov.au/products/databases)) contains databases of all registered veterinary medicines (as well as those available for use under permit) in Australia and provides a useful tool for checking registration details. This information is also available as an iPhone app. Search for 'APVMA' in the iPhone AppStore to download this App.

Australian companies and individuals who sell veterinary medicines either through a store or online have a responsibility to ensure that the products are registered and have an APVMA/NRA approval number. Penalties for supplying unregistered products are significant.

*(Cont'd)*

Some products may be covered by a permit rather than registration. In this case an APVMA permit number should be visible on the product label. For example:

- Approved under APVMA permit number 54321, or
- This product is NOT REGISTERED and only available under permit number 54321

### What about international products?

Often products may be found for sale or supply online that are either not available in Australia, or appear to be an overseas version of an Australian registered product.

It is an offence to import unregistered products (including overseas versions of an Australian product), or unapproved active constituents into Australia. These offences carry fines of up to \$51 000 for an individual or \$255 000 for a company.

The APVMA may issue consent to import unregistered veterinary products or unapproved active ingredients for specific purposes.

The APVMA does not issue consent to import overseas versions of products that are registered and available within Australia.

Further information on importing veterinary medicines is available on the APVMA website at [www.apvma.gov.au/supply/import.php](http://www.apvma.gov.au/supply/import.php).

### Exemptions for veterinary surgeons

Certain exemptions exist under the Agvet Code for the manufacture or use of veterinary products by veterinary surgeons.

In the course of their role, vets may make, or request a pharmacist to make veterinary products that are not registered. They may also supply or use these products to treat animals under their direct care, providing that they are complying with other relevant laws such as prescribing and poisons legislation.

For further information on veterinarians and the relevant exemptions please refer to our fact sheet 'Veterinarians and veterinary medicines' at: [www.apvma.gov.au/publications/fact\\_sheets/docs/veterinarians.pdf](http://www.apvma.gov.au/publications/fact_sheets/docs/veterinarians.pdf).

### What about natural products?

'Natural' (including complementary, alternative and herbal) products often fall within the legislative definition for veterinary medicines and if so must be registered prior to being offered for supply.

### What should you consider?

#### *Breaking down packs or containers*

Sometimes larger containers or multiple packs of pet medicines are unlawfully broken down to smaller packs or single doses for retail sale. Examples include the supply of individual containers of flea treatments or worming tablets. Often these smaller packs do not contain the essential use and safety information from the label. The supply of products in unapproved pack sizes or without the APVMA approved label are offences under the Agvet Code.

The APVMA has had numerous reports of customers being supplied with single-use treatments with no written instructions for use. They have taken the product home and administered the treatment incorrectly. In some cases, treatments designed for topical use have been given by mouth and those designed for dogs have been administered to cats. Death or injury of animals can and does occur.

#### *Product expiry dates*

All veterinary chemical products require an expiry date on their label. Over time the contents of chemical products can change and become ineffective or even dangerous. It is important to note that it is an offence to supply a product after the expiry date has passed.

### Help us make agricultural and veterinary products safer and more effective

If a veterinary medicine that you have purchased did not work as expected, or there was an adverse reaction when the product was used in accordance with label instructions, contact the APVMA's Adverse Experience Reporting Program. This program provides important feedback to the registration process and helps us ensure that products on the market continue to be safe and effective.

Reporting forms and information are available on the APVMA website and by phone on 1800 700 583.

## CONTACTING THE APVMA WANT MORE INFORMATION?

If you would like to know more about the APVMA or any of its services please contact us.

#### *Postal address:*

PO Box 6182

KINGSTON ACT 2604 AUSTRALIA

T: +61 2 6210 4700

F: +61 2 6210 4874

Email: [compliance@apvma.gov.au](mailto:compliance@apvma.gov.au)

**MAY 2013**

