Disposal of medicinal products

THE Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) has received a number of inquiries from veterinary practices concerning the disposal of waste medicinal products and their classification as hazardous waste.

The responsibility for the legislation and policy surrounding the correct disposal of waste lies with the Environment Agency (EA) in England and Wales, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in Scotland and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in Northern Ireland, not the VMD.

Special requirements apply when disposing of waste that has been classified as hazardous. Medicines with cytotoxic or cytostatic properties are classified as hazardous waste. However, the EA and other agencies may consider other medicines, which at first sight do not appear to be cytotoxic or cytostatic, to be hazardous if they have one or more of the following hazardous properties: toxic (H6), carcinogenic (H7), mutagenic (H11) or toxic for reproduction (H10).

Information on the disposal and classification of hazardous waste can be found on the websites of the respective agencies (for example, www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/waste/default.aspx).

The information provided includes the Technical Guidance W/M2, which provides ‘interpretation of the definition and classification of hazardous waste’. This publication was prepared jointly by the EA, SEPA and NIEA.

If you wish to check whether a particular medicine can be classified as hazardous waste, you should contact the appropriate agency: EA – www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx; SEPA – www.sepa.org.uk/default.aspx; NIEA – www.doeni.gov.uk/index.htm

You may also find it helpful to contact the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (www.rpharms.com/home/home.asp) for additional information. The BVA also has some guidelines on the members’ pages of its website (www.bva.co.uk/default.aspx) concerning hazardous waste.

Disposal advice included on the labelling of veterinary medicines is usually determined at a European level in accordance with agreed standard wording. The labels of veterinary medicines authorised in the UK may also detail special requirements for disposal and any environmental warnings as agreed during the assessment process.

The VMD has produced the following general guidance on disposal of veterinary medicines in the UK. However, if you are in any doubt, you should consult the appropriate environment agency.

POM-V – You should consult your local waste regulation authority for the correct method of disposing of all POM-V products. If the POM-V product is also a Controlled Drug then you should refer to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 (UK) for the method of disposal of unused product.

POM-VPS – You should consult your local waste regulation authority for the correct method of disposing of POM-VPS products. An exception to this advice are products that are used in domestic premises. These products can be disposed of in the domestic refuse.

NPA-VPS and AVM-GSL – Products in these distribution categories can be disposed of in either farm or domestic refuse.

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