



**Game Feed
Trade
Association**

RESPONSIBLE USE OF MEDICINES IN AGRICULTURE ALLIANCE
ruma

**Countryside
Alliance**



The
**NATIONAL
GAMEKEEPERS'
Organisation**



**Veterinary
Medicines
Directorate**



Gamebird Joint Communication 2022

As we continue through the second phase of optimising antibiotic use in Livestock sectors, RUMA's Targets Taskforce 2 (TTF2), the game sector, along with some others, needs to maintain focus on further reductions. If we are to meet the target that we set ourselves for the TTF2 period, which ends in 2024, we will need to make significant further reductions over the next three years. Below are some summary figures from the 2021 collection, along with some reinforcement of the rules and regulations as well as some exciting new initiatives to help take our sector forward. As we look to make further sustainable reductions in the prescription of antibiotics, there needs to be greater focus on improving systems, raising welfare standards and research so that we create a sector that is less prone to disease challenges and is consequently less dependent on medication.

2020 figures were somewhat misleading, due to the effects of Covid-19 so 2021 figures will be compared with 2019.

1. There was a meaningful 11% overall reduction in antibiotics used compared with 2019. This is in line with our TTF2 target.
2. There has been a fall of 77.7% in the use of in-feed antibiotics and a fall of 55.4% in overall use of antibiotics since 2016, balanced against a significant increase in the number of birds being reared.
3. HP-CIAs (Highest Priority – Critically Important Antibiotics) such as Enrofloxacin showed a 48% reduction since 2019.

Highlighting the rules

1. All antibiotics must be responsibly prescribed by a UK based vet who has the birds under his/her care, and ideally by a vet who is a member of the BVPA (British Veterinary Poultry Association).
2. Whilst the use of HP-CIAs has been successfully reduced, we as a sector are still using proportionally too much and therefore there must be renewed pressure to only use these antibiotics as a last resort and with good reason, e.g. where culture and sensitivity tests suggest it is the only suitable option.
3. In-Feed antibiotics may only be considered as an appropriate method of administration to treat birds following consultation, diagnosis and direction by the veterinary surgeon. The third and fourth pages of this Joint Communication are the VMD/RCVS guidance document "Reminder of best practice on prescribing and supply of antibiotics for gamebirds"

The following veterinary practices support this document: Avivets, Chipping Norton Veterinary Hospital, Crowshall Veterinary Services, Dalton's Game Consultancy Ltd., Field & Forest Veterinary Consultancy, Garth Pig Practice Ltd., Hafren Veterinary Group, Howells Veterinary Services Ltd., Mount Vets Poultry & Gamebird Group, Norcal, Poultry Health Services, Sandhill Veterinary Services, Slate Hall Veterinary Practice, South Downs Veterinary Consultancy, St David's Game Bird Services & Wood Veterinary Group.

2022 Initiatives

1. Individual Antibiotic Usage - We will continue to encourage all gamebird breeders, rearers and keepers to engage with their vet and calculate their antibiotic usage each rearing season for both partridges and pheasants. This is part of the Trusted Game accreditation scheme and should enable poor performers to receive targeted assistance to find ways of reducing their reliance on antibiotics.
2. Game Sector Training – This standardised curriculum has been designed by individual members of the BVPA game bird subcommittee in conjunction with keepers and game farmers. The programme is for keepers of breeding birds, hatcheries, rearing farms and shoots and covers a wide range of topics and was rolled out as a pilot scheme in late 2021 and will be tested further throughout 2022.
3. New Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) Group - The AIC have formed a new Game Feed Committee (GFC) group with all game feed compounders represented, they plan to meet twice a year with game bird veterinary and the Game Farmers Association (GFA) representation at their meetings. This should enable more effective and wide-spread communication with the game feed sector. The GFC are due to release the FAR (Feed Adviser Register) Game Feed Module later this year that will offer a comprehensive course covering the fundamentals of game bird farm and shoot feed planning as well as the nutritional link to animal health, welfare and productivity.
4. There will be a shift in focus toward further reductions in antibiotic use being achieved through raising standards and improving systems and their attendant Health and Welfare impacts. Thus far most of our attention has been on reducing unnecessary or unjustified prescribing of antibiotics.
5. Assurance - Assurance and auditing in the game rearing sector is a significant step forward in raising standards. Development of the BGA game farm assurance scheme, which began in 2021, will contribute significantly to a sustained antibiotic reduction process. The sector needs to be encouraged to engage with Assurance and the auditing process wherever possible.
6. The recently launched Trusted Game Health and Welfare scheme will, along with the BGA Assurance scheme, be fundamental to the sectors' efforts to reduce antibiotic use by improving systems and Health and Welfare standards (as per point 4 above) through widespread engagement. Participation in these schemes will help to reduce the need for antibiotics and should be encouraged across the whole sector.
7. Pen Scoring Matrix - Developed by gamebird vets, the veterinary pen scoring matrix was launched and developed throughout the sector in 2021. This will form part of a wider initiative to promote better management and welfare through improvements to the environment that birds are released into and relates directly to point 4. Antibiotic use immediately post release accounts for a disproportionately high percentage of total use and any reduction in AB use at release will contribute significantly to the cause.
8. Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIA) - From soluble AB collection data, the GFA in conjunction with gamebird vets will continue to amass data relating to the use of fluoroquinolone. In particular, further detail will be sought on what the 22% of use described as "other" relates to. This will be done by a combination of season usage figures where practice software allows, and individual usage sheets if not. An HP-CIA sign off sheet will be available on the GFA website, and an alternative is included as part of the BGA's Game Farm Audit. This data will help to inform strategic planning to further reduce the sector's use of HP-CIA in the future.

9. Data collected so far suggests that a significant proportion of fluoroquinolone use is for the treatment of bacterial infection in chicks during the first week of life. It is questionable whether this has quantifiable long-term benefits or whether it merely moves the problem to later in the rearing cycle. Yolk sac and other bacterial infections should only be treated in the first week of life where such treatment can be fully justified.

10. Macrolides - Macrolides are on the European Medicines Agency's amber caution list. The macrolides Tylosin and Tylvalosin, as well as Pleuromutilins (including Tiamulin) should only be used where there is no clinically effective AB available in a lower risk category.

11. The value of Mycoplasma gallisepticum testing – This is increasingly recognised as important in the effort to manage Mycoplasma infection (bulgy eye). A combination of testing and clinical assessment of the birds gives hope for controlling this difficult condition in future, for the benefit of the whole sector down to the smallest shoot. This will also help drive down antibiotic usage.

Only together can we carve out the changes necessary to become sustainable for future generations.



Reminder on best practice concerning the prescribing and supply of antibiotics for Gamebirds

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) would like to explain the legislation that governs the prescribing and supply of antibiotics, and would encourage anyone within the gamebird sector who has any concerns or suspicions of misconduct to report this as outlined.

A veterinary surgeon who prescribes a veterinary medicinal product classified as a POM-V, which includes all antibiotics, must first carry out a clinical assessment of the bird(s) and the bird(s) must be under that veterinary surgeon's care. A veterinary surgeon cannot usually have a bird under his or her care if there has been no physical examination.

In terms of current RCVS Code of professional conduct / guidance, in order for a bird to be under his/her care:

- The veterinary surgeon must have been given the responsibility for the health of the bird or flock by the owner of the owner's agent, and this must be real not nominal.
- The bird or flock must have been seen immediately before prescription or recently/ often enough for the veterinary surgeon to have personal knowledge of the condition of the bird or current health status of the flock to make a diagnosis and prescribe.

- The veterinary surgeon must maintain clinical records of that flock/individual.

Obligations also exist in relation to provision of 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief.

Antibiotics should not be 'borrowed' or moved between farms or groups of birds on a farm as they are prescribed for a specific site, species and population.

If you are a veterinary surgeon and have any concerns about the conduct of veterinary professional in relation to the Code of Professional conduct, then these can be reported to the RCVS via:

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/concerns/im-a-vet-professional-and-i-want-to-raise-a-concern/>

Or, if you are an animal owner you should visit: <https://animalowners.rcvs.org.uk/concerns/>

The VMD enforces the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR) and takes the issue of illegal supply of medicines (such as the use of unauthorised antibiotics) and suspected prescription misuse very seriously. Some examples of contraventions are:

- Illegal supply of medicines - Veterinary medicines which are advertised for the treatment or prevention of disease, or which have that function, must be authorised by the VMD before they can be legally sold or used in the UK.

The marketing, importation, sale, supply, administration and possession of a veterinary medicine not in line with the regulations is illegal.

- Prescription misuse - this includes: Alteration of an existing prescription – including changing the date the prescription was signed, changing the quantity of the product, inclusion of additional medicines or altering the number of repeats.

Prescription fraud – includes supplying the same prescriptions to multiple retailers for supply and forging the signature of a vet, pharmacist or Suitably Qualified Person.

Any known contravention should be reported to the VMD who will consider whether enforcement action is required. If you have any information about suspected illegal medicines use, then please contact the VMD on: enforcement@vmd.gov.uk. You can also find a prescriptions misuse reporting form at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-prescription-misuse-animal-medicine>.

All information will be treated confidentially and will be considered carefully in line with the VMD's enforcement strategy*.

If you have any further questions, then please get in contact with either RCVS or VMD.
*VMD Enforcement Strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enforcement-strategy-for-animal-medicines>

Enforcement Notices

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-animal-medicines-seizure-and-improvement-notices>