

Veterinary medicines - how do the new regulations affect you?



On the 1 December 2025 significant changes came into effect for farmers whose animals need antiparasitic medicines (e.g. wormers, flukicides etc)

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Farmers have always been able to go into their local vet or merchant and simply purchase these products 'over-the-counter'.

The new rules require that all such purchases are connected to a prescription issued by a veterinary surgeon. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has developed a National Veterinary Prescription System (NVPS) which records and tracks the use of these products.

Each prescription will have a 16 digit code and each product on the prescription will have a 16 digit Line number. When the prescription is issued by the vet, the farmer will receive a text message containing the 16 digit code. If the farmer prefers, a copy of the

prescription can be printed.

The farmer is free to purchase their antiparasitic medicines from a retailer of their choice. They can shop around for the best prices and can purchase different components from different retailers. A farmer could decide to purchase the oral worm drench from Retailer A and the pour on from Retailer B.

Despite both products being on the same prescription they will each have their own separate line number with a different 16 digit code. Once a product is dispensed by a retailer they will update the NVPS. The farmer will receive an email showing that the product has been dispensed.

So what is the big change? Farmers

sheep

can no longer spontaneously go to the retailer to purchase the product over-the-counter and go and treat their animals. There's some planning required in so far as that the farmer will need to have acquired a veterinary prescription with that 16 digit code before they can purchase the medicine.

So the farmer must contact their vet to get the products prescribed. A second option is to fill out a "Proper Assessment Protocol" which the retailer will forward to a linked veterinary surgeon who will issue a prescription.

This assessment protocol will require details of the holding, animal types and history of treatment/faecal egg counts etc. The veterinarian preparing the prescription will be able to make contact with the farmer to clarify any issues if required. Once the prescription is issued, the farmer will receive a text message with the 16-digit code associated with the prescription and can then go back to the retailer to get the products dispensed.

How long is a prescription valid for?

A prescription for anti-parasitic medicines is valid for up to six months. This means there is time for the farmer to have a detailed conversation with their veterinary prescriber around the proper health planning and treatment of internal and external parasites of the herd/flock.

The aim here should be to draw up a plan as to what treatments, and what testing, should be considered for the various stock types on the farm over the following six to 12 months. Once the prescription is issued it is valid for six months and the farmer needs to ensure that the products that are on the prescription are dispensed within that six-month period.

The farmer does not have to use all of the product within the six months but they do need to have purchased



(product dispensed) within the six month period. It is also possible for farmers to have their prescription partially dispensed.

So, for example if a farmer has a prescription for 10 litres of a particular product that they're going to use and they go to the retailer but only purchase five litres the retailer will then update the NVPS that five litres has been dispensed.

The next time the farmer goes back in to purchase more of that particular product, the retailer will enter the 16 digit code into the NVPS and it will show that five litres of the product has already been dispensed and that the remaining five litres has yet to be dispensed.

What if the retailer does not have the exact named product in stock?

If the retailer does not have the product listed on the prescription in stock,

they can then click a drop down list on the NVPS which will show a list of comparable products.

One of these can be dispensed in the place of the product specified on the prescription.

What is recorded on the NVPS and can the farmer access the records?

All veterinary medicines prescribed and dispensed are listed on the NVPS. This is a major advantage for farmers who can access the NVPS through the NVPS portal on AgFood and therefore have one location where all health-related treatments are recorded.

In order for this to work smoothly farmers should ensure that the name and herd number on each prescription exactly matches the name and herd number associated with their AgFood account. This is a requirement from a GDPR point of view.

Summary

So, in summary. The option to simply purchase antiparasitic drugs without a prescription is gone. From a farmer perspective a little more planning is required. The route of supply will not change significantly as most licensed merchants will continue to stock and dispense these products subject to the farmer having a prescription.

One clear advantage is that the 16 digit code sent as a text message on the farmer's phone will eliminate the need to carry physical copies of the prescription and the need to mind those where all the items on the prescription were not dispensed at once.

Once bedded-in the new system will become second nature to farmers.

The usefulness of a discussion with your vet around sustainable parasite control at the time of requesting a prescription should not be underestimated.

In the past some farmers were unnecessarily treating, or using inappropriate products, when treating livestock

for parasites. The new system should lead to better treatment decisions. This should lead to better value for money for the farmer; better animal performance; and reduced risk of resistance developing to disease control products.

