

Veterinary Ireland and BVA Media Release 26th October 2017



Effect of Brexit starting to be felt across the island of Ireland

Uncertainty over the future licensing and supply of veterinary medicines for Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is a pressing concern as the UK plans to leave the EU, agreed Veterinary Ireland and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) in a Brexit coordination meeting in Belfast, last week (18 October).

Currently, European legislation regulates the way veterinary medicines are authorised, marketed and used. Post-Brexit, access to veterinary medicines could potentially be restricted and, in order to protect animal and public health, BVA has been calling on the UK Government to guarantee that the UK veterinary profession has ongoing access to all existing and future veterinary medicines licensed through the EU regulatory systems and existing import certificate mechanisms.

The UK's exit from the EU veterinary medicines approval system means the market for English-language labelling and data information will shrink, which could have a knock-on effect for those EU countries, including the Republic of Ireland, that heavily rely on licensing and packaging with the UK.

John O'Connor, Veterinary Ireland President, said:

“This is a big problem. If Brexit prompts EU medicine manufacturers to decide that English-language packaging and information-leaflets aren't commercially viable then what is the Republic of Ireland going to do – start producing medicines ourselves? It is vital that Brexit negotiations ensure ongoing access to all existing and new veterinary medicines licensed through the EU and other regulatory systems so that it does not lead to interrupted supply difficulties for any existing stakeholders. This could seriously put at risk animal health, welfare and food safety.”

BVA's Brexit and the Veterinary Profession report, which was developed using the experience and expertise of BVA members, specialist divisions and representatives from Northern Ireland and the other devolved regions of the UK, outlines how pharmaceutical companies are less likely to be willing to fund separate applications to both the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the UK. BVA is recommending that any new regulatory model should seek to maintain a link between the licensing system to be introduced in the UK and the current EU veterinary medicine approval systems.

BVA Junior Vice President Simon Doherty, who chaired the meeting, said:

“For animal health and welfare, public health and food safety and trade, the veterinary profession in Great Britain and across the island of Ireland must continue to have access to medicines for the treatment of animals that meet standards that ensure safety, quality and efficacy. Continued cooperation, like this, with our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland is vital to ensure the strong cross-border relationships, the integrated North-South structures and daily movements of people, livestock and pets can continue for the benefit of animal health and welfare.”

Another priority issue discussed by Veterinary Ireland, BVA and BVA Northern Ireland Branch Officers was the Common Travel Area, which pre-dates the EU and enables an estimated 30,000 movements of people, livestock and pets each day. The veterinary organisations will be encouraging their respective governments to consult on how best to ensure trade and professional services, including the veterinary practices and services that straddle the border, can continue post-Brexit without disruption.

Other Brexit challenges and opportunities that were discussed included: workforce and migration, disease eradication and surveillance, agriculture and trade. Veterinary Ireland and BVA committed to continue their cooperation, particularly regarding Brexit, both bilaterally and through joint working and action taken through the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE).

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