BUYING VETERINARY MEDICINES ON THE INTERNET

The BHA’s expectation is that veterinary medicines used on horses in training are obtained and used legally. A simple way to achieve this when buying medicines online is to only use a retailer that is enrolled in the VMD Accredited Retailer Scheme. This scheme was established in May 2012 and Internet Retailers who have met the accreditation scheme’s requirements are issued with a logo to indicate their accreditation. The logo contains a unique number and customers can confirm accreditation by clicking on the logo to access the Internet Retailer database (http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/InternetRetailers/accredited-retailers.aspx) on the VMD’s website. The image below shows the logo:

![Logo](image)

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It is the Government body responsible for the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR). The VMR set out UK controls on veterinary medicines.

The VMD inspects premises in the UK that manufacture, distribute and supply veterinary medicines including internet retailers. The goal is to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of veterinary medicines that are sold in the UK.

A large proportion of UK based websites are legitimate, run by qualified professionals and adhere to the UK’s Veterinary Medicine Regulations (VMR). There are however a number of sites, including those overseas, that are in breach of the UK’s VMR. The following information is designed to help you legitimately buy safe and effective veterinary medicines when using a site that is not VMD Accredited.

Here are four key points to consider prior to purchasing medicines on the internet:

1. You must buy from a seller based in the UK
2. Products must be UK authorised medicines:
   - Labelling must be in English (multi-lingual labels may be used for products authorised in more than one country)
   - The product must bear a UK marketing authorisation (MA) number. This can be identified by the letters ‘Vm’ or ‘Vh’ followed by a five-digit code, an oblique and a four-digit code, or if the product is authorised throughout Europe its prefix will be ‘Eu’ followed by the numeric code. E.g.
- Equipalazone oral powder – Vm10434/4005

Only products that display an authorisation number in the above described format should be used. Products without an authorisation number can only be legally purchased and imported by a veterinary surgeon who has applied for a special certificate from the VMD. Possession of an unauthorised product without a special certificate is an offence and you can be prosecuted.

3. The seller must ask for a prescription if the medicines requires one; and
4. for prescription medicines (POM-V or POM-VPS) the person selling the medicines must be a vet, pharmacist or suitably qualified person

If you buy veterinary medicines from an unaccredited retailer without making the necessary checks, you risk buying an unauthorised veterinary medicine that potentially puts you in breach of the law and therefore BHA rules. For further information, including a complete list of accredited retailers and UK authorised medicines, please refer to the VMD website www.vmd.defra.gov.uk. For any other questions please contact the BHA Equine Health and Welfare team on equine@britishhorseracing.com.