



BRITISH  
GAME  
ALLIANCE

RESPONSIBLE USE OF MEDICINES IN AGRICULTURE ALLIANCE

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Game Feed  
Trade  
Association

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Veterinary  
Medicines  
Directorate

## Gamebird Joint Communication 2021

As with all sectors, but especially food producing sectors, there continues to be a need to further reduce the levels of antibiotics (AB) prescribed. Below are some summary figures from the 2020 collection, along with some reinforcement of the rules and regulations, as well as some exciting new initiatives to help forward our sector and help maintain the sustainability for future generations to come. As a sector 2020 has been one of the hardest years on record, but huge congratulations are due to those that persevered through Covid and also helped to continue reducing our overall AB use.

### Silver Linings from 2020

1. There was an impressive **42% overall reduction** in antibiotics used compared with 2019.\*
2. And a **70% reduction since 2016**.\*
3. **HP-CIAs** (High Priority – Critically Important Antibiotics) such as Enrofloxacin showed a **62% reduction since 2019, and over 66% reduction since 2016**.\*

\*There was a significant fall (25-35%) in the number of gamebirds reared and released in 2020 compared to 2019 due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Any comparison of 2020 figures with previous or subsequent years must be made in the context of this.

### 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**.
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., 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.

## 2021 Initiatives

1. **Game Sector Training** – This is a standardised curriculum designed by individual members of the BVPA game working group 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 will be rolled out as a pilot scheme in late 2021 with a view to accreditation in 2022.
2. **The value of *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* testing** – This is increasingly recognised as important in the efforts 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.**
3. **New Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC) Group** - The AIC have formed a new 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.
4. **Individual Antibiotic Usage** - We would like to see all game-rearers calculate their antibiotic usage each rearing season for both partridges and pheasants in conjunction with their vets. High achievers can then be encouraged to inspire and support poor performers through practical advice and mentoring.
5. **High Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIA)** - From soluble AB collection data, the GFA in conjunction with gamebird vets will seek to amass data relating to the use of Fluoroquinolones. 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.
6. **Pen Scoring Matrix** - Developed by gamebird vets, the veterinary pen scoring matrix will be launched and developed throughout the sector in 2021. This will be part of a wider initiative to promote better management and welfare through improvements to the environment that birds are released into. Antibiotic use immediately post release accounts for a disproportionately high percentage of total use and any reduction in AB use at release will be contribute significantly to the cause.
7. **Assurance** - Assurance and auditing in the game rearing sector is a significant step forward in raising standards. Development of schemes such as the GFA/BGA game farm audit, due to begin in 2021, will contribute significantly to a sustained antibiotic reduction process.
8. **Macrolides** - Macrolides are on the European Medicines Agency's amber caution list. Tylosin, Tylvalosin and also Pleuromutilins (including Tiamulin) should only be used where there is no clinically effective AB available in a lower risk category, or where their use would reduce the overall burden of active compound required.

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



Veterinary  
Medicines  
Directorate

RCVS

## **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](mailto: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.

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\*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>