CURRENT PRACTICES FOR THE SALE AND DISTRIBUTION OF VETERINARY DRUGS IN AFRICA TO VETERINARIANS

Dr Dudley V. Gradwell
Manuscript of the presentation given during the Session 1: Current situation and specificity of veterinary products distribution and use in Africa
Current practices for the sale and distribution of veterinary drugs in Africa to Veterinarians

D.V. Gradwell
BVSc., B.Com, Consultant Veterinarian
P.O.Box 2894
Faerie Glen, 0043
South Africa

Abstract

The sale of Veterinary drugs in the various countries of Africa, differ considerably from country to country. In some other countries and regional areas a very well structured system is in place and backed up by strong laws and regulations. These regulations are all based on similar lines. Where an active and strong Inspectorate system is not in place, these regulations are however meaningless.

In South Africa two Acts are responsible for controlling the distribution of POM (Prescription Only Medicines) and a separate Act to control the distribution of products sold to farmers. Namibia uses a similar method of controlling the distribution of veterinary drugs. In Zimbabwe a similar system is in place to control these products. In the East African Community the legislation is also of a similar nature but different names are used for the various categories. With these few examples it is obvious that the African situation needs a channel and legislation to distribute POM drugs to Veterinarians only but also cannot do without a general distribution of animal medicines to bona fide professional animal keepers and pet owners. It is suggested that the EU system of POM drugs only is not suitable for Africa but the UK system of POM-V and POM-VPS is more in line with the needs and conditions of Africa but should be simplified. The problem arises with all the different names for the same category of drugs in the various parts of Africa.

It is suggested that a committee to standardize the nomenclature and basic regulations to be used as guidelines in Africa would be the first step to standardizing procedures for harmonization.
I. Introduction

A number of different systems are used to distribute veterinary drugs from the suppliers to the end users in Africa. Although there are differences in each individual country, the basic systems are fairly similar, but what does differ considerably is the control that is exercised by the authorities in each country as to how well the distribution chain is inspected and controlled. A fully functioning system of inspectors and regulations to back up these inspectors is what is lacking at present.

This is essential to control the illegal use and distribution of prescription only medicines (POM) and to ensure the safe use of drugs and to prevent unwanted and dangerous residues in animal products going for human consumption. Without these controls the export of products from Africa will be severely jeopardized.

This paper will look at some of the countries in Africa and suggestions made to harmonise the sale and distribution of veterinary drugs to Veterinarians in Africa.

II. Situation

The legislation that is already in place in many African countries is robust and sound and has been put together by many experts who have obviously used the legislation from Europe and the USA as a basis from which to work. The legislation has been promulgated and already exists in many African countries and is strong enough to prevent illegal and incorrect use of veterinary drugs in our animals. Some examples of the legislation in a few of the countries is shown below.

1/ **Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda**

The EAC countries have a very strong set of regulations which cover the sale and use of Veterinary Medicinal Products, Food, Drugs and Cosmetics. These laws were put together by experts from the three countries and the regulations are such that a good inspectorate could easily ensure the correct distribution and use of medicines in the three countries. This will only be possible however if the authorities give their full backing to the legislation and inspectorate and accept the importance of strict controls for the prevention of illegal sales and use of veterinary medicines and the effect this will have on the export of food. At present medicines are taken from suppliers to wholesalers or direct to a number of veterinary centers, from where they are distributed further. Veterinarians and pharmacists are available in these centers to control the sale of the medicines.
2/ Nigeria

In Nigeria the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control recently set up the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to control the sale and distribution of veterinary medicines in the country. The laws are again robust and strong and penalties for incorrect use are all in place. A well organized Inspectorate and support from the authorities is all that is needed to control illegal use of drugs in the country.

3/ Republic of South Africa and Namibia

In these two countries the systems are very similar and regional harmonization is well under way. Two separate laws govern the sale and use of medicines in South Africa. The Medicines and Related Substances Control Act (Act 101) controls all aspects of the use and distribution of Veterinary Medicines other than stock remedies or farm feeds in the area. The law governs all aspects of POM’s. Over 800 registrations are governed under this Act. A second act, the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act (Act 36) covers all non POM products and over 1200 registrations are covered by this Act. What makes these acts efficient and prevents the importation of illegal and inferior drugs into the countries is a very strong and powerful Inspectorate that is backed up by the authorities and legal action when and if necessary.

4/ Zambia and Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has a single Medicines Control Act that is strong and was well governed by a strong inspectorate that also inspected Wholesalers, Pharmacies and Veterinary practices annually. Veterinary surgeries are registered and dispensing licences approved. Zambia has in recent years set up a similar system based on the Zimbabwe legislation which is also robust and able to control the use of veterinary medicines to ensure safe and correct use of the drugs.

5/ European Union (EU)

In the EU, very strict legislation covers the use, sale and distribution of veterinary medicines. The legislation requires that all medicines must be channeled through the veterinary surgeon but the United Kingdom (UK) has adapted these regulations to allow for a two tier system, where the POM drugs (POM – V) are for veterinary surgeon use only and then a second tier of OTC (Over the Counter) drugs can be sold by Suitably Qualified Persons via Veterinarians, Pharmacies, Cooperatives and other channels, the so-called POM – VPS drugs. Other categories of drugs for non food producing animals are also catered for in this UK system.
III. Discussion

In many of the African countries there is already excellent and strong legislation available to control all aspects of the veterinary medicine chain from supplier to end user and to protect our livestock from injudicious use and illegal or inferior drugs. It is suggested that a two tier system similar to that used in the UK but adapted to African systems be approved in African countries. In many areas efficient and good legislation is already in place and in the countries where this is not yet complete the Veterinary Authorities should be encouraged to use the legislation from other areas or that available from the OIE and convince their authorities of the need for such legislation.

Any legislation however, no matter how good and robust will fail unless a strong and viable inspectorate does not accompany this legislation. It is suggested that all African countries make the inspectorates a priority with the Authorities because the correct use, sale and distribution of Veterinary Medicines in Africa will live or die by the strength and abilities of the inspectorates.

A pan-African system of suggested legislation, Inspectorates and nomenclature for POM and OTC drugs should be made available to all countries to use as a basis and a guideline for similar legislation. These guidelines can be adapted in the various regions and countries of Africa.