

Issues in Toxicology

Kevin Woodward

Toxicological Effects of Veterinary Medicinal Products in Humans

Volume 1



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Toxicological Effects of Veterinary Medicinal Products in Humans

Volume 1

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Preface

The term “veterinary medicinal product” describes those medicines developed specifically for use in animals. The development of these products involves an enormous amount of intellectual effort and physical labour as well as a considerable amount of financial investment in order to ensure that animals have available products that are of the appropriate quality and with the correct degree of effectiveness. These products also need to be safe for the animal patient as well as for the user, for the consumer of edible animal products and for the environment. On the other hand, the term “veterinary drug” is misleading, as the majority of drugs used in veterinary medicine, with very few exceptions, either are used in human medicine or have been used in the past in human medicine. As a consequence, we tend to know a considerable amount about the toxicity of veterinary drugs from their use in human medicine. We only know a little regarding the safety of veterinary medicinal products in humans from their use in animals.

This book attempts to bring together some of this knowledge and experience to assess the safety of veterinary medicinal products. As described in the pages that follow, this involves user safety and safety of those who consume products derived from animals treated with veterinary medicines, and for the most part this means examining their toxicological and pharmacological properties. However, some veterinary drugs are also microbiologically active, and this presents certain hazards that also need to be taken into account. Finally, like human drugs, these products also eventually find their way into the environment. As a result, to examine the potential hazards arising from veterinary medicine, we need to evaluate their toxicological and pharmacological properties, *and* we need to consider their microbiological properties and their eventual fate in the natural environment. This latter aspect is of concern not only because organisms might encounter the remnants of veterinary medicines as a result of environmental contamination, but also because of the potential effects for human health from the contamination of land and drinking

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water. I have tried to reach a balance, and review the main issues that might impact on human safety arising from the use of veterinary medicinal products. It is not possible to cover every product or drug in a work of this nature, and I have made no attempt to do so. Some products are used infrequently, and some are only used in certain countries. Many others are human drugs that are used off-label in animals. I have attempted to cover the major drug classes as well as some individual drugs of interest. Some of these are now of historical interest as many have fallen out of use or have been replaced with more effective and safer alternatives. Nevertheless, it would be remiss to avoid discussion of these where they may have impacted human safety in the past, so I have included them here.

I would like to thank the authors who have invested significant efforts by providing chapters for this book – Dr Tim Marrs, Derek Renshaw and Professor Peter Silley. I would also like to thank my family – and dogs – for their forbearance and patience while I have been working on this project.

Kevin Woodward
Surrey

Contents

Volume 1

Chapter 1	Occupational Health and Safety Among Veterinarians and Veterinary Workers	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Physical Injuries	2
1.2.1	Accidents and Related Incidents	2
1.2.2	Needlestick Injuries	4
1.2.3	Zoonotic Diseases	5
1.2.4	Dermatoses	5
1.2.5	Allergies	6
1.2.6	Neoplastic Diseases	6
1.2.7	Specific Risks for Women	7
1.2.8	Mental Health	7
1.3	Conclusions	8
	References	8
Chapter 2	Regulation of Veterinary Medicines	21
2.1	Introduction	21
2.2	Criteria for Evaluation and Authorisation of Veterinary Medicinal Products	22
2.3	European Union Legislation	24
2.3.1	The National Procedure	25
2.3.2	The Mutual Recognition Procedure	25
2.3.3	The Decentralised Procedure	27
2.3.4	The Centralised Procedure	27

Issues in Toxicology No. 14

Toxicological Effects of Veterinary Medicinal Products in Humans: Volume 1

By Kevin N. Woodward

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2.3.5	Maximum Residue Limits	28
2.3.6	Pharmacovigilance	29
2.4	Conclusions	36
	References	37
Chapter 3	Consumer Safety – Maximum Residue Limits	40
3.1	Introduction	40
3.2	Establishment of MRLs in the EU	41
3.3	MRLs – Other Considerations	46
3.4	The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)	50
3.5	Practical Uses of MRLs	51
3.6	Residues Surveillance	53
3.6.1	Residues and Residues Studies	54
3.6.2	Residues Surveillance for Veterinary Drugs in the UK	56
3.7	Residues Avoidance	59
3.8	Conclusions	62
	References	63
Chapter 4	The Assessment of User Safety	81
4.1	Introduction	81
4.2	The Assessment Process	83
4.2.1	Hazard Identification and Assessment	83
4.2.2	Exposure Assessment	86
4.3	Biological Monitoring	92
4.4	Risk Assessment	93
4.5	Risk Management	95
4.6	Risk Communication	96
4.7	Conclusions	97
	References	98
Chapter 5	General Anaesthetics	117
5.1	Introduction	117
5.2	Human Health Concerns	118
5.3	Inhalation Anaesthetics	118
5.3.1	Nitrous Oxide	119
5.3.2	Halothane	119
5.3.3	Isoflurane	121
5.3.4	Sevoflurane	123
5.3.5	Enflurane	124

5.4	Injectable Anaesthetics	124
5.4.1	Propofol	124
5.4.2	Barbiturates	126
5.4.3	Etomidate	127
5.4.4	Ketamine	128
5.5	Conclusions	130
	References	130

Chapter 6	Veterinary Products Containing Pesticide Active Ingredients	150
6.1	Introduction	150
6.2	Toxicity of Individual Substances	151
6.2.1	Pyrethroids	151
6.2.2	Overview of the Toxic Effects of the Pyrethroids in Animals	164
6.2.3	Toxicity to Humans	165
6.3	Imidacloprid	166
6.3.1	Effects in Humans	167
6.4	Organophosphorus Compounds	167
6.4.1	Diazinon	168
6.4.2	Azamethiphos	170
6.5	Metaflumizone	172
6.6	Indoxacarb	174
6.7	Fipronil	176
6.7.1	Toxicity to Humans	179
6.8	Amitraz	179
6.8.1	Toxicity to Humans	181
6.9	Dicyclanil	182
6.10	Cyromazine	184
6.10.1	Effects in Humans	187
6.11	Benzoylureas – Diflubenzuron/Lufenuron/ Teflubenzuron	187
6.12	Spinosad	190
6.13	Macrocyclic Lactones	192
6.13.1	Metabolism	194
6.13.2	Toxicology	195
6.13.3	Summary of Laboratory Animal Toxicity Studies	198
6.13.4	Factors Affecting Toxicity	199
6.14	Adverse Effects in Target Species	200
6.15	Human Toxicity	202
6.16	Conclusions	203
	References	203

Chapter 7	Antineoplastic Drugs	244
7.1	Introduction	244
7.2	Classification of Antineoplastic Drugs	244
7.2.1	The Alkylating Agents	245
7.2.2	Inhibitors of Mitosis	245
7.2.3	Antimetabolites	246
7.2.4	Antibiotics	248
7.2.5	Platinum Drugs	251
7.3	Toxicity	251
7.4	Conclusions	256
	References	256
Chapter 8	Antimicrobial Drugs	273
8.1	Introduction	273
8.2	The β -Lactam Drugs	274
8.2.1	The Penicillins	274
8.2.2	The Cephalosporins	276
8.2.3	Aminoglycosides	280
8.2.4	Aminocyclitols	282
8.2.5	The Quinolones	283
8.2.6	Macrolides	285
8.2.7	The Phenicol	289
8.2.8	Tetracyclines	291
8.2.9	Polyether Ionophore Antibiotics	298
8.2.10	Lincosamides	298
8.2.11	Polymixins	300
8.2.12	Pleuromutilins	301
8.2.13	Bacitracin	302
8.2.14	Avilamycin	303
8.2.15	Trimethoprim, Baquiloprim and Sulfonamides	303
8.2.16	Quinoxaline-N-Oxides	306
8.2.17	Other Antibiotic Growth Promoters	308
8.2.18	Nitrofurans	308
8.2.19	Fusidic Acid	310
8.2.20	Novobiocin	310
8.2.21	Rifaximin	311
8.2.22	Dapsone	312
8.2.23	Chlorhexidine	313
8.3	Conclusions	314
	References	315

Volume 2

Chapter 9	Human Safety of Coccidiostats: A European Perspective	1
	<i>Derek W. Renshaw</i>	
9.1	Introduction	1
9.1.1	Coccidiosis, Coccidiostats and Anticoccidial Medicines	1
9.1.2	Human Exposure	2
9.1.3	Committees that Evaluate the Safety of Coccidiostats	2
9.2	Approaches Taken to Ensure the Human Safety of Coccidiostats	2
9.2.1	Consumer Safety	2
9.2.2	User Safety	3
9.2.3	Inconsistencies in the Values of ADIs	3
9.2.4	Inconsistencies in the Approaches Used to Establish MRLs	4
9.2.5	Cross-contamination of Feed with Coccidiostats	5
9.3	The Safety of Authorised Coccidiostats	5
9.3.1	Ionophoric Polyether Coccidiostats	5
9.3.2	Non-ionophoric Coccidiostats	15
9.3.3	Other Anticoccidial Substances	25
9.4	Conclusions	25
	References	26
Chapter 10	Organophosphorus Veterinary Medicines	33
	<i>Timothy C. Marrs</i>	
10.1	Introduction	33
10.2	Anticholinesterase Activity	38
10.3	Clinical Effects	39
10.3.1	Syndromes Associated with OP Exposure	39
10.3.2	Other Effects of OPs	44
10.3.3	Diagnostic Tests and Biomarkers	47
10.3.4	Management of OP Poisoning	49
10.4	Exposure and Regulatory Aspects	50
10.4.1	European Union	50
10.4.2	USA	51
10.4.3	Interpretation of Regulatory Studies	51
10.4.4	Pharmacovigilance	52

10.5	Sheep Dips in the United Kingdom	52
10.5.1	Introduction	52
10.5.2	Treatments	53
10.5.3	Organophosphate Plunge Dips	53
10.6	Conclusion	54
	References	54
Chapter 11	Antifungal Drugs	71
11.1	Introduction	71
11.2	Griseofulvin	72
11.3	Amphotericin B and Other Polyenes	74
11.4	The Azoles	76
11.4.1	Steroidogenesis Inhibition	76
11.4.2	Hepatotoxicity	79
11.4.3	Other Effects	79
11.5	Conclusions	80
	References	81
Chapter 12	Antiparasitic Drugs	95
12.1	Introduction	95
12.2	Individual Drugs or Groups of Drugs	95
12.2.1	The Benzimidazoles	95
12.2.2	Levamisole	98
12.2.3	Salicylanilides	99
12.2.4	Clorsulon	101
12.2.5	Tetrahydropyrimidines	102
12.2.6	Pyrazinoisoquinolones	104
12.2.7	Monepantel	107
12.2.8	Piperazine	108
12.2.9	Diethylcarbamazine	110
12.2.10	Nitroxynil	111
12.2.11	Halofuginone	112
12.2.12	Nitroimidazoles	113
12.2.13	Imidocarb	116
12.2.14	The Trypanocidal Drugs – Isometamidium and Diminazene	118
12.2.15	Emodepside	122
12.3	Conclusions	123
	References	126

Chapter 13	Some Other Pharmacologically Active Drugs	155
13.1	Introduction	155
13.2	Opiates and Synthetic Opiates	155
13.2.1	Etorphine	155
13.2.2	Butorphanol	157
13.2.3	Buprenorphine	158
13.2.4	Fentanyl	159
13.3	Euthanasia Agents	161
13.4	Neuroactive Steroids	161
13.5	Sedative Agents	163
13.5.1	α_2 -Receptor Adrenergic Agonists	163
13.5.2	Phenothiazines	166
13.5.3	Butyrophenone Neuroleptic Agents	167
13.6	Carazolol	169
13.7	Clenbuterol	170
13.8	Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs	175
13.8.1	Gastrointestinal Effects	176
13.8.2	Cardiac Effects	177
13.8.3	Nephrotoxicity	178
13.8.4	Phenylbutazone	180
13.9	Tropane Alkaloids	180
13.10	Local Anaesthetics	182
13.11	Antiepileptic Drugs	184
13.11.1	Potassium Bromide	184
13.12	Substances with Hormonal Activity	185
13.12.1	Insulin	185
13.12.2	Steroid Hormones	187
13.13	Corticosteroids	194
13.14	Prostaglandins	195
13.15	Somatotropins	198
13.16	Conclusions	199
	References	202
Chapter 14	Human Safety of Veterinary Vaccines	248
14.1	Introduction	248
14.2	Zoonotic Diseases	252
14.3	Physical Injury – High-pressure Injection Injuries	253
14.4	Human Consumer Safety of Vaccine Excipients	255
14.5	Conclusions	257
	References	257

Chapter 15	Adverse Drug Reactions in Humans – Data from Veterinary Pharmacovigilance Schemes	273
15.1	Introduction	273
15.2	The Suspected Adverse Reactions Reporting Scheme – United Kingdom	273
15.2.1	Dog and Cat Products Containing Imidacloprid	275
15.2.2	Sprays Containing Dichlorvos	276
15.2.3	Organophosphorus Sheep Dips	276
15.3	Adverse Reaction Reporting in the USA	282
15.4	Conclusions	355
	References	355
Chapter 16	Veterinary Medicines and the Environment	365
16.1	Introduction	365
16.2	Human Pharmaceuticals	366
16.3	Veterinary Pharmaceuticals	366
16.3.1	Regulation of Veterinary Medicinal Products and Environmental Safety	367
16.3.2	Adverse Environmental Effects of Veterinary Medicinal Products	372
16.3.3	Reporting of Environmental Adverse Events and Incidents with Veterinary Medicines	375
16.4	Conclusions	376
	References	378
Chapter 17	Potential Adverse Microbiological Effects of Antimicrobials	403
	<i>P. Silley</i>	
17.1	Introduction	403
17.2	Antimicrobial Resistance and <i>Campylobacter</i> Species	405
17.2.1	Why is <i>Campylobacter</i> Important?	405
17.2.2	What Do We Know About Resistance Development in <i>Campylobacter</i> ?	408
17.3	Acceptable Daily Intake of Antimicrobial Residues	413
17.3.1	Steps in Determining the Need for a Microbiological ADI	415
17.3.2	How the Data are Handled – Colonization Barrier	416

17.3.3	Calculations	417
17.3.4	How the Data are Handled – Resistance Development	419
17.3.5	Guideline Revision	420
17.4	Concluding Thoughts	420
	References	422

Subject Index	429
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CHAPTER 1

Occupational Health and Safety Among Veterinarians and Veterinary Workers

1.1 Introduction

Many people use, and are therefore potentially exposed to, veterinary medicinal products. These include the pet-owning public, farmers, animal breeders and keepers, and, of course, veterinarians and other veterinary staff such as veterinary nurses and practice receptionists. The public may be intermittently exposed to veterinary medicinal products, apart from those with animals with chronic conditions such as epilepsy and diabetes where exposures may be more frequent. Farmers may be responsible for the administration of a wide variety of drugs and, occasionally, exposures have the potential to be significant, for example when dipping sheep and mixing or administering in-feed antimicrobial agents. Veterinarians and veterinary nurses are potentially exposed to a wide range of veterinary drugs including anaesthetics, euthanasia agents, anti-neoplastic agents and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. It is thus tempting to assume that these professionals are assailed on a daily basis by the combined actions of a number of pharmacologically and toxicologically active agents, and if these could be removed from veterinary practice, the world, or at least the veterinary world, would be a better place in which to live and work.

However, just as it would be wrong to assume that the industrial workplace is a chemophobe's nightmare, or a toxicologists dream, it is equally incorrect to think of the veterinary surgery or clinic as a toxicological playground. Although industry, especially the chemical industry, has had its fair share of chemical disasters, such as those involving asbestos, benzene, vinyl chloride

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