

■ EQUINE STEM CELL PRODUCTS

In the UK the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2009 require the collection, storage, processing, production and administration of equine stem cells for use as an autologous treatment for horses to be carried out in accordance with an authorisation for an Equine Stem Cell Centre. There is currently one authorised Equine Stem Cell Centre (ESCC) operating in the UK, which is VetCell and their partner lab, Biobest. The ESCC authorisation enables the VMD to regulate the quality of the processes used in the production of equine stem cells and the authorisation holder's site and facilities are subject to regular inspection by VMD as part of the authorisation process.

Equine stem cell harvesting is a specialised procedure and the ESCC holder ensures that a comprehensive training programme is in place to ensure that stem cell removal is performed with minimal animal welfare concerns.

Equine stem cells may only be supplied to veterinary surgeons for administration to horses under their care. We are aware that some veterinary surgeons are using equine stem cell products that are produced in other countries and are then imported for administration in the UK. Veterinary surgeons should be aware that there is a risk in using these stem cell products as we have no means of assessing: the quality of the processes under which they have been produced, the controls used to ensure they are free from contamination, the traceability of the products or the conditions in which they have been transported.

Further information on the regulation of Equine Stem Cell Centres: Martha Spagnuolo-Weaver (VMD, 01932 338319 e-mail: m.spagnuolo-weaver@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk) or Caroline Povey (VMD, 01932 338316 e-mail: c.povey@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk).

■ COPPER TOXICITY

Although it is difficult to source, ammonium tetrathiomolybdate (ATTM) has been used as an antidote to copper poisoning either orally, subcutaneously or intravenously in cattle and sheep.

ATTM is not an authorised veterinary medicinal product and it does not have a Maximum Residue Limit. If it is used to treat copper poisoning, the animal must not ever enter the food chain as no withdrawal period can be set.

Further information: Jackie Atkinson (VMD, 01932 338387, e-mail: j.atkinson@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk).

■ UPDATE ON THE VETERINARY MEDICINES REGULATIONS (VMRs)

The revoking and remaking of the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR) have been delayed and consequently the VMR 2010 did not come into force on 1st October 2010 as initially planned. The VMR 2009 (SI 2297) will remain in force until further notice.

The comments received in the recent public consultation are being considered and an announcement will be made shortly on the agreed changes to the VMR and when these will come into force.

Further information: Jo Cawthorne (VMD, 01932 338317, e-mail: j.cawthorne@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk).