

TAKING MEDICINES OVERSEAS

This guidance has been drawn up by the [BVA Overseas Group](#) to assist volunteers undertaking work in developing countries; it may also be helpful to those working for charities in Europe.

What can I export?

What can I import?

General advice

Always try to use drugs sourced in-country for reasons of legality and sustainability. Buy medicines from reputable sources and be aware that the quality and efficacy of these drugs may not be equivalent to UK or EU sourced products.

If you are carrying medicines from the UK to another country then you need to find out whether the drugs are legal/licensed in that country. The product manufacturer would be the best point of contact for information on the licensing of a particular product. The local Veterinary Council, or equivalent, of that country may also be able to advise.

Please remember it is imperative to contact the Veterinary Council* of the country in which you intend to practise in order to determine requirements for registration.

The [BVA](#) does not endorse the supply or use of out-of-date drugs.

Exporting medicines

If exporting to an EU Member State then the rules are clear: check with the importing EU Member State to find out whether the medicine is legally allowed to be used in that country. If it is not legal/licensed in that country then it is ILLEGAL under UK law to export it or carry it there.

This may be less of a problem for most volunteers who are going further afield than the EU but nevertheless it is relevant to those going on neutering trips to Spain or Greece, for example.

The [Veterinary Medicines Directorate](#) (VMD) will be able to provide clarification on the rules on exporting to an EU Member State within the context of the 'cascade' scheme.

If the importing country is not an EU Member State then there is no UK law that prevents a veterinary surgeon carrying a drug that he/she is legally allowed to possess but there may be legal implications if it is not legal/licensed in that country.

Please remember one has to be legally allowed to possess the medicine. Veterinary surgeons must not prescribe without examining the patient. A practising veterinary surgeon must not hand prescription medicines to a client - for example, before that client heads off to a country to volunteer as a kennel hand for a month.

Controlled drugs

If a substance is classified as a 'controlled drug' in the UK (i.e. in a veterinary context this would mean ketamine mainly and the barbiturates) then to export it or take it out of the country requires an export licence from the [Home Office](#). To acquire an export licence requires an import permit from the receiving country or at least a letter from the receiving country stating it has no objections to the importation. These letters usually come from the Ministry of Health (as, we suspect, it is mainly human drugs they are talking about) but the Ministry of Agriculture or FDA-equivalent would be acceptable. The Home Office has advised the BVA that a letter from the receiving animal health or welfare organisation, or project in the country, may suffice but it could not guarantee that it would be sufficient for the Home Office to grant the export licence.

Without the relevant export licence, it is ILLEGAL under UK law to carry out of the country a drug that is classified as controlled and could result in disciplinary procedures.

Further information

[BVA](#) Good Practice Guide on Veterinary Medicines
www.bva.co.uk (publications and resources)

[BVA Overseas Group](#)

www.bva.co.uk (overseas)

E: helenac@bva.co.uk

T: +44 (0)20 7908 6342

[Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons](#) Professional Conduct Department

www.rcvs.org.uk

E: profcon@rcvs.org.uk

T: +44 (0)20 7202 0789

[Veterinary Medicines Directorate](#) Legal Department

www.vmd.gov.uk

T: +44 (0)1932 336911

[Home Office](#)

www.homeoffice.gov.uk

T: +44 (0)20 7035 4848

[European Medicines Agency](#)

www.ema.europa.eu

T: +44 (0)20 7418 8400

[National Office of Animal Health](#) (NOAH)

www.noah.co.uk

T: +44 (0)20 8367 3131

*Contact details of Veterinary Councils may be found in the [RCVS](#) Register (Section 4: Overseas Veterinary Organisations) or the [BVA Overseas Group](#) may be able to assist.

This advice is part of a range of BVA guidance notes on working/volunteering overseas. For further guidance visit the BVA Overseas pages at www.bva.co.uk

