



Veterinary
Medicines
Directorate

Call for Evidence on veterinary medicines containing fipronil or imidacloprid

16 April 2026



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Overview

Fipronil and imidacloprid are active substances in veterinary medicines widely used for the treatment and prevention of flea and tick infestations in cats and dogs. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is reviewing whether these veterinary medicines should continue to be sold without professional advice. This is following emerging evidence that they may contribute to environmental contamination, particularly in watercourses.

Purpose

This Call for Evidence seeks data on environmental impacts of fipronil or imidacloprid and on how any potential changes to their supply routes might affect animal welfare, pet owners, businesses, and access to these medicines.

Audience

Anyone may respond to the Call for Evidence. Those who may have a particular interest include:

- Marketing authorisation holders and wholesale distributors of veterinary medicines
- Veterinary surgeons, suitably qualified persons (SQPs) and pharmacists
- Pet owners
- Academia
- Environmental NGOs and conservation groups
- Water industry

How to respond

Our preferred way of receiving responses is through the Citizen Space platform.

If you are unable to use Citizen Space, you can download the Call for Evidence documents and return your response via email to consultation@vmd.gov.uk. (Please include "Call for Evidence" in the subject line).

The Call for Evidence will run for 8 weeks. The Call for Evidence opens on 16th April 2026 and closes at 23:59 on 11th June 2026. Any responses received after this date will not be analysed.

Confidentiality and data protection

Information you provide in response to this Call for Evidence may be disclosed in accordance with UK legislation, including the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you would like the information you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us and explain why. For example, for commercial sensitivity, please tell us what the likely harm might be. We will consider your request, but we cannot guarantee confidentiality in all circumstances. Any decision to withhold information will be made in line with the relevant legislation, including the Freedom of Information Act and the associated public interest test. Automatic confidentiality disclaimers generated by IT systems will not be treated as confidentiality requests.

We will process your personal data in accordance with applicable data protection laws. For further information about how we handle personal data, please see our [Privacy Policy](#). The owners of Citizen Space, [Delib Ltd](#), will also have access to your personal data. Read [Delib's privacy notice](#) for information on how they use your personal data.

We will publish a summary of the responses received on GOV.UK. The summary may list the organisations that responded, but it will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

Other Information

This Call for Evidence is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office "Consultation Principles" and be found at: [Microsoft Word - Consultation Principles \(1\).docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Next steps

After the close of this Call for Evidence, the VMD will publish the summary of responses within the recommended 12-week period. The findings from the Call for Evidence will inform the review and a report will be published by the VMD. All feedback will be anonymised in the summary for responses and the final report.

Introduction

What are fipronil and imidacloprid?

Fipronil and imidacloprid are active substances found in veterinary medicines used to treat and prevent flea and tick infestations in cats and dogs, providing protection against parasitic diseases and helping to reduce the risk of zoonotic transmission, thereby supporting both animal and human health.

Definitions

- **Authorised Veterinary Medicine – General Sales List (AVM-GSL):** Medicines that can be sold without professional advice (for example, from supermarkets, pet shops, online stores)
- **SQP:** Suitably Qualified Person authorised to supply certain veterinary medicines and provide advice
- **Environmental contamination:** Residues from active substances entering the waterways or wider environment (for example, via swimming, bathing, washing bedding, runoff) and potentially affecting non-target species

Purpose of this Call for Evidence

The VMD is seeking evidence to help determine whether point-of-sale advice is necessary for all veterinary medicines containing fipronil or imidacloprid to support responsible use.

As the UK authority responsible for deciding how veterinary medicines can be supplied, the VMD must balance animal health and welfare, public health, environmental protection and continued access to veterinary medicines. Evidence gathered through this call will help ensure any future decisions are proportionate and evidence based.

Why are we reviewing these medicines?

Recent evidence indicates that these medicines are contributing to environmental contamination, particularly in watercourses.

Monitoring by the Environment Agency in England has found concentrations of fipronil and imidacloprid in surface water frequently exceed toxicity thresholds for insects that live in water.

Research has identified several plausible pathways through which active substances in veterinary medicines used in pets for the treatment and prevention of fleas and ticks, may reach the environment. These include emissions arising from treated pets or households with treated pets, such as:

- Wastewater from bathing treated pets, laundering bedding, clothing, or materials, as well as handwashing after contact with treated pets
- Direct transfer to surface waters from treated pets entering or swimming in natural bodies of water

Residues have also been detected beyond watercourses, including in wild bird nests.

Veterinary medicines may not be the only source of these active substances in the environment, and relative contributions from different sources remain uncertain. We are seeking further evidence to improve understanding of these pathways and their significance.

What is under review?

Many veterinary medicines containing fipronil or imidacloprid are currently classified as **AVM-GSL**, meaning they can be sold without professional advice, for example, in supermarkets.

Given the emerging evidence of environmental contamination, the VMD is reviewing whether this route of supply remains appropriate. The review will explore whether requiring professional advice at the point of sale could support responsible use and disposal to help reduce environmental risks.

What evidence are we seeking?

We are seeking evidence, including unpublished data, on:

Environmental contamination

- Residues or effects of fipronil or imidacloprid from veterinary medicines on insects that live in water or other non-target species
- Pathways by which these substances enter the environment
- Monitoring, modelling, or ecological studies relevant to environmental concentrations or risks

Impacts of a potential change in distribution category

We are also seeking information on how restricting the supply routes for these medicines might affect:

- Pet owners
- Animal health and welfare
- Environmental outcomes
- Businesses
- Access to, and availability of, veterinary medicines

This evidence will help ensure our decisions are proportionate, evidence based, and support animals, people, and the environment.

Where prompted, you may upload evidence, such as reports, datasets, publications (maximum file size: 25 MB) or provide a brief citation/link.

Please submit your evidence by 11th June 2026.

Section 1 – About you

1. Would you like your response to be confidential? (Select one option only)
 - Yes
 - No
2. If you answered yes to question 1, please give your reason for remaining confidential?
3. In order for us to consider the evidence, may we contact you for more information, if necessary?
 - Yes, you may contact me if needed
 - No, please do not contact me but I understand this may limit the usefulness of my contribution
4. Who are you responding as? (Select one option only)
 - Individual – You are responding with your personal views, rather than as an official representative of a business / business association / other organisation
 - Public sector body – You are responding in an official capacity as a representative of a local government organisation / public service provider / other public sector body in the UK or elsewhere
 - Industry – You are responding in an official capacity representing the views of a business
 - Conservation group / NGO– You are responding in an official capacity as the representative of a non-governmental organisation / trade union / other organisation
 - Academia – You are responding in an official capacity as a representative of an academic institution
 - Other – please specify
5. Which of the following best describes the role or field you belong to? (If you have multiple roles, please select the one which best represents your interests in this Call for Evidence response) (Select one option only)
 - Consumer (pet owner)
 - Retailer of veterinary medicines
 - Veterinary surgeon
 - Suitably qualified person (SQP)
 - Pharmacist
 - Marketing authorisation holder
 - Wholesaler / distributor of medicines
 - Academic

- Professional keeper of animals
- NGO / Conservation group
- Other - please state

6. Full name or organisation: [Free text option]

7. Email address (if you have chosen to remain confidential or asked not to be contacted, we will not contact you): [Free text option]

8. Please select where you/your organisation is based (select all that apply):

- England
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Other – please specify

Section 2 – Your use of flea and tick treatments

9. Do you currently have a cat or dog?

- Yes
- No

10. In the last 12 months, have you bought any veterinary medicines for the treatment and prevention of fleas and ticks containing either fipronil or imidacloprid?

- Yes – Fipronil
- Yes – Imidacloprid
- Yes – Both Fipronil and Imidacloprid
- No
- Unsure
- Other – please specify

11. If yes to Question 9, where did you buy the veterinary medicine for the treatment and prevention of fleas and ticks?

Please select all that apply.

- Veterinary practice(s)
- Pet store(s)
- Pharmacy(ies)
- Agricultural merchant(s)
- Supermarket(s)

- Online retailer(s)
- Other – please specify

12. If yes to Question 9, were any of these purchases included as part of a regular subscription service?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Section 3 – Evidence relating to environmental contamination

13. Do you hold any published or non-public evidence relating to the effects of residues from veterinary medicines containing fipronil or imidacloprid on insects that live in water or other non-target species? (For example, evidence such as reports, datasets, publications on environmental contamination from veterinary fipronil or imidacloprid, and any monitoring or ecological studies on environmental levels or risks).

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

14. If yes, please upload supporting evidence (maximum file size: 25 MB). You may also include written evidence below: [Free text option]

Any additional supporting documents may be submitted to consultation@vmd.gov.uk.

Please ensure no personal data is included in your evidence.

Section 4 - Your view on any potential impacts of a change in distribution category to restrict supply routes

Note: The VMD is not considering a full ban on veterinary medicines containing fipronil or imidacloprid. These medicines are important for treating and preventing flea and tick infestations and associated disease, reducing zoonotic risks, and avoiding discomfort in pets. Animal health and welfare remain paramount and continued access to these medicines for pet owners remains a key priority.

This Call for Evidence will inform the review on whether professional advice (from a vet, SQP or pharmacist) at the point of sale could support responsible use and help reduce environmental risks.

15. Do you agree with a change in distribution category to restrict supply routes for these medicines?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

16. Please provide additional information, particularly on impacts of a potential change in distribution category for you, your business, or the wider sector (for example costs, accessibility, animal health and welfare).

Supporting evidence may be uploaded (maximum file size: 25 MB). You may also include written evidence below: [Free text option]

Any additional supporting documents may be submitted to consultation@vmd.gov.uk.

Please ensure no personal data is included in your evidence.