

PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE: WORM & FLEA TREATMENTS

Who needs to see these records?

If you are offering Home Boarding, Day Care or running Boarding Kennels, checking worm and flea treatment records is an essential part of business. Note that dogs on the premises other than paying guests are subject to the same guidance requirements.



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Whilst it is not essential for Dog Walkers, Pet Sitters and those running group training to ask about worm and flea treatments, businesses are affected if fleas are passed between your client's dogs, and it is therefore wise to understand the role that preventative healthcare products play for the industry in general.

Types of Treatment

Licensed businesses must check that the products used to worm and flea treat animals are approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). There is a database of products that can be searched if presented with an unfamiliar product:

<https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/productinformationdatabase>

To get to grips with the database, it is necessary to understand the distribution labels that products are given when approved by the VMD:

- **POM-V (Prescription Only Medicine – Veterinarian):** Only a veterinary surgeon can prescribe these, and they must be supplied by a vet or pharmacist
- **POM-VPS (Prescription Only Medicine – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, Suitably Qualified Person):** Can be prescribed and supplied by any of the three (Vets, Pharmacists, SQPs)
- **NFA-VPS (Non-Food Animal – Veterinarian, Pharmacist, SQP):** Medicines for companion animals, including horses, that can be supplied by a vet, pharmacist, or SQP
- **AVM-GSL (Authorised Veterinary Medicine – General Sales List):** No legal restriction on supply, making them available for retail by any outlet

Veterinary Prescribed Products (POM-V)

- Products are licensed with, and approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
- Products are 'prescription only' medicine that only vets may prescribe
- Dogs require a periodic check-up to receive further doses
- Dosages are stronger and products are modern and rotated to prevent treatment resistance

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Behind the Pharmacy or Vet Counter Products (POM-VPS and NFA-VPS)

- Products are licensed with, and approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
- Products are designated (and often marked) as POM-VPS
- Products are older, and often used to be POM-V but have been downgraded

Products on the Shelf in Pet Stores and Supermarkets (AVM-GSL)

- Products are licensed with, and approved by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)
- There are no purchasing checks, and items are often lower dosage than POM-V and POM-VPS

Herbal and Homeopathic Treatments

- Some products are licensed by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and these are suitable for dogs under a boarding or day care licence. Those approved will be listed in a separate tab on the VMD Product Database and will be marked with AVM-GSL on the packaging.

Food Supplements

- Items marked purely as a food supplement are not approved by the VMD and are not suitable as preventative healthcare products under a DEFRA Animal Welfare licence.

Gathering Evidence

Maintaining records for worm and flea is generally more difficult than those for vaccinations. The treatments are not given by a vet, meaning that even if purchased through the vet practice, there is no formal record to show when they were given or administered.

Those with dogs on a veterinary practice payment scheme, such as a “Healthy Pet Club” are far more likely to give the treatments as directed, as the payment each month is expensive and would be wasted if the products were not used. Those purchasing off the shelf products require more careful monitoring as it is easier to forget to purchase or give products when the vet is not contacting the owner to alert them that a refill is due.

Frequency of Gathering Evidence

In a perfect world customers would message you monthly with a photo of the packets and tell you they just gave the required worm or flea treatments to their dog. With a very small customer base you may be able to achieve this, but it is difficult. If they do this, how do you record the data? A spreadsheet? Marking in a diary? A note on their Activity & Welfare Log Sheet would make the most sense. No matter how you choose to record the information, make sure that that you can quickly and easily identify customers who have not sent in their response, so you know who to chase.

Life is easier for those who only offer boarding. Customers must give products and the date last given in the booking form. Most flea treatments are monthly, meaning that you are only looking

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for closest date to the dog's arrival, but if you have the date of the most recent flea and worm treatments prior to arrival, the licence requirement is covered.

For those offering day care and boarding, what is a reasonable approach?

Capturing information every time a dog books in for holiday boarding is a good start. Each time the dog comes for a week or more, you are checking that their worm and flea treatments are up to date before they come into contact with other guests throughout the period.

For Day Care, a quarterly approach is reasonable. List the dogs registered with you and send a mass message to all owners asking them to confirm that their dog is still receiving worm and flea treatment as previously described, and to please drop you a message if there are any changes to product names or frequency. As a minimum you are looking for a response in writing acknowledging your message and stating 'all good, no changes'. If there are changes, you will now have them in writing. Ensure that you keep a record of these messages; screen shots stored electronically are acceptable if you can easily pull up information when requested by an inspector.

Those in Commercial Day Care with a large client base may choose to use an electronic app to gather worm and flea evidence from customers. It is always worth scanning through the information provided to make sure that the right details have been given because some systems are unable to validate the responses given and will accept a customer writing 'Sorry we ran out and are seeing the vet next week' as a positive response – when of course that is not what you were expecting.

Write a Clear Procedure

Once you have decided on an approach to collecting worm and flea records, write a clear procedure describing the steps you will take to collect and the record the information. Include what will happen if someone fails to provide the information for their dog when asked. Make sure that everyone within your business follows the same approach. Even if an inspector does not agree with your plan to collect the data, they will not be able to say that you have failed in this aspect of the licence guidance as you have a written approach. If this is the case they may ask you to change the frequency of data collection.

Make Customer Responsibilities Clear

Collecting worm and flea treatment data can be difficult as there is no hard and fast rule for how often dogs should receive treatment, the decision is left to the individual vet that sets up the arrangements for the dog. Owners can often forget to give the treatment on the planned day and can sometimes view your requesting this information as unimportant.

Make sure that your Terms and Conditions covers the need for regular checks on worm and flea treatment. Make clear that the information is mandatory for the dog to attend for services. This

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prevents customers from considering your refusal to accept a dog as 'poor service' if they have not provided the information when asked.

If you use Repeat Booking Forms for overnight boarding, add this as a mandatory question to the form. It means that as a minimum you are receiving the information for the month that the dog is boarding with you, and for boarding, that is all that is important.

Worm Counts

Completing worm counts is becoming a popular alternative to giving regular, periodic worm treatment. Worming products do not prevent animals from getting worms, they treat the dog as if they have worms and kill any that happen to be there. The logic therefore stands that if the dog did not have worms, they did not need to be given worming treatment.

The DEFRA guidance for Home Boarding states:

“All reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent and control the spread among animals and people of infectious disease, pathogens and parasites.”

“If there is evidence of external parasites such as fleas, ticks or lice, the dog must be treated with an appropriate product authorised by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and licensed for use in the UK...”

The Commercial Day Care and Kennel Boarding guidance documents contain very similar statements.

This means that the focus is on ensuring that dogs are free of internal and external parasites but does not state how this must be achieved. It would be reasonable to conclude that an owner completing a worm count is taking reasonable precautions, as the faeces is sent to a laboratory and checked for worms, the owner does not do this themselves.

It would therefore be reasonable to state that if an owner is able to present a laboratory or veterinary report showing that their dog does not have worms on a regular basis, they are taking reasonable precautions. If the dog is found to have worms, they must be treated with a VMD approved wormer. Owners that can agree to this approach should be considered as taking 'reasonable precautions'.

If, however, you do not wish to accept worm counts as an alternative to periodic worming, this decision is up to you as the Licence Holder.

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Unexpected Changes

When a dog arrives for overnight boarding and you notice that the wormer in the bag (needed to be given during the stay) is different from that you have listed, it can be frustrating. Customers are not deliberately withholding these changes from you; they may be completely unaware that the product has changed. Like human medicine, vets sometimes change these things without warning. It would be reasonable for the customer to assume that the product they have been given is the same base product under a different brand name, and it is not really a change.

Vets periodically change worm and flea treatments for a very important reason, over time, parasites become resistant to the active ingredients in these products and they cease working. This can trigger localised outbreaks that are hard to control. DEFRA instructs the rotation of active ingredients for this very reason, and it does not just affect dogs, parasitic products are rotated for all pet animals, and for animals within the food chain.

Further Information

For further details, and to purchase the document templates mentioned in this Help Sheet please go to www.support4petbusiness.co.uk.

Sources

<https://www.noah.co.uk/topics/regulation/controls-on-veterinary-medicines>