Information on imports of veterinary medicines into Switzerland by veterinarians

The importing of veterinary medicines into Switzerland by veterinarians with a cantonal retail trading licence is regulated in Article 7 of the Veterinary Medicinal Products Ordinance (VMPO, SR 812.212.27).

Remark: *The holder of the cantonal retail trading licence is the veterinarian and not the practice. The customs clearance process may be simplified if the name of the responsible veterinarian is given in addition to the name of the practice when the order is placed.*

1. Lawfulness of the import

This is the responsibility of the veterinarian.

- The import is not permitted if the same veterinary medicine is authorised and available in Switzerland (see www.tierarzneimittel.ch).
- It is equally not permitted to import the product if a veterinary medicine which may be used as an alternative is authorised and available in Switzerland.
- Only veterinary medicines authorised by a country with an equivalent authorisation system may be imported (see Chapter 2).
- Veterinary medicines for the treatment of pets may be imported without a licence, but only in a quantity sufficient to treat a single animal or group of animals (see the “Information on implementation of the VMPO” issued by the FSVO).

2. Veterinary medicines authorised abroad

The veterinarian must ensure that the imported veterinary medicine has been authorised by a country with an authorisation system considered by Swissmedic to be equivalent. It is certain that the quality, safety and efficacy of such medicinal products have been assessed and authorised in accordance with international standards. These products may therefore be imported – provided all other conditions are met. Links to more information:

- Swissmedic list of countries with comparable veterinary medicinal product control
- Global database - SMArt - Safe Medicines for Animals (smart-org.uk)
- Database of the European Heads of Medicines Agencies
- Database of the New Zealand authority ACVM
- Database of the Austrian authority AGES
- Database of the French authority ANSES
- Database of the Australian authority APVMA
- Database of the German authority BfArM
- Database of the U.S. American authority FDA
- Database of the Canadian authority Health Canada
- Database of the British authority VMD

Responsibility for a medicinal product lies with the so-called authorisation holder, and the product is assigned a unique authorisation number when it is granted official authorisation. This information is shown on the label or the pack of the medicinal product and enables the legitimacy of the medicine to be verified.

Remark: *The code and batch numbers or GTIN (Global Trade Item Number) must not be confused with a medicinal product authorisation number. See the example in Figure 1.*

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Figure 1: Even though this product looks genuine and, for example, a code number is shown, it is not authorised in Europe and must not be imported.

Vigilance: *If a veterinary medicine authorised abroad is used in Switzerland and undesirable effects occur, these must be reported to the Veterinary Medicines Department at Swissmedic. Swissmedic checks whether the report must be passed on to the competent foreign authority.*

3. Products excluded from import according to Art. 7 VMPO

The fact that a product can be obtained through a wholesaler is no guarantee that it is also authorised as a medicinal product in the respective country and may be imported.

- Under the terms of Art. 7 VMPO, formula-related medicinal products[1] (e.g. magistral formula) cannot be imported since these products have not been authorised.
- Products are sometimes deliberately advertised not as medicinal products but as a device, cosmetic product, chemical, etc. in order to circumvent the requirement for authorisation. However, certain products must be classified as medicinal products because of their delivery form (see Chapter 3.1).

3.1 Delimination

The following examples of delivery forms are usually classified as veterinary medicines in Switzerland, irrespective of the way they are advertised:

- Solutions and suspensions for injection
- Products for intrauterine and intravaginal use
- Implants containing active substances (see example in Figure 2)

Such products may therefore only be imported if they are authorised as veterinary medicines.

[1] For background information on the manufacture and placing on the market of formula-related medicinal products see the Swissmedic website

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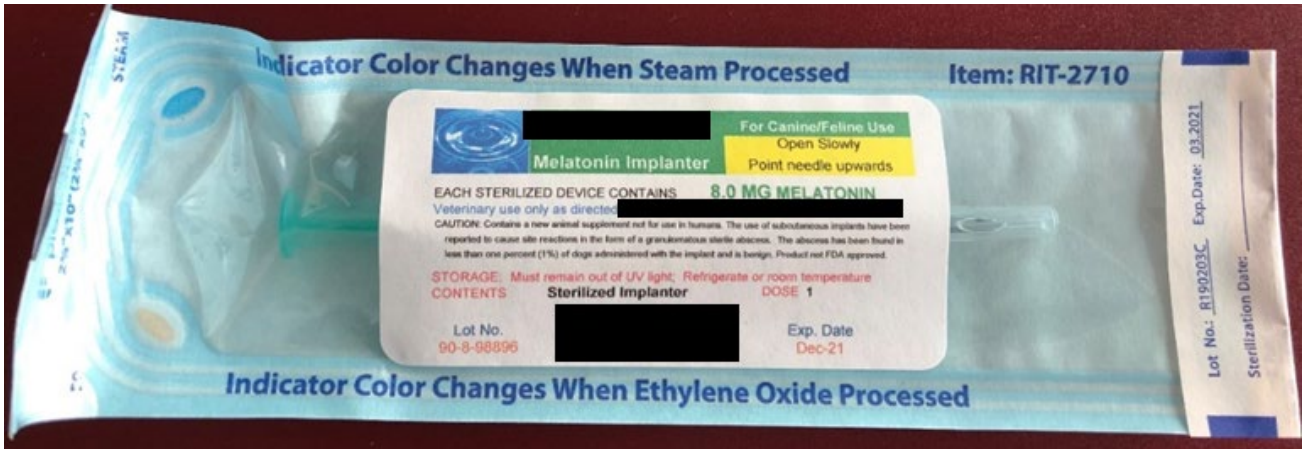

Figure 2: This melatonin implant is declared by the supplier as a "device", but in Switzerland it may only be placed on the market as a medicinal product.

3.2 **Import of active pharmaceutical ingredients**

- An active pharmaceutical ingredient is intended for the manufacture of medicinal products. However, **only** establishments with a licence issued by Swissmedic or the competent Cantonal Veterinarian/Medical Officer are permitted to undertake manufacture (e.g. public pharmacies). Active ingredients may only be imported in the context of licensed manufacture.
- Figure 3 shows a product that is described as an "active ingredient". It is advertised with claims to medicinal effects and information is provided about its use as a therapeutic product. Products of this kind are classified as medicinal products but must not be imported because they have not been authorised.

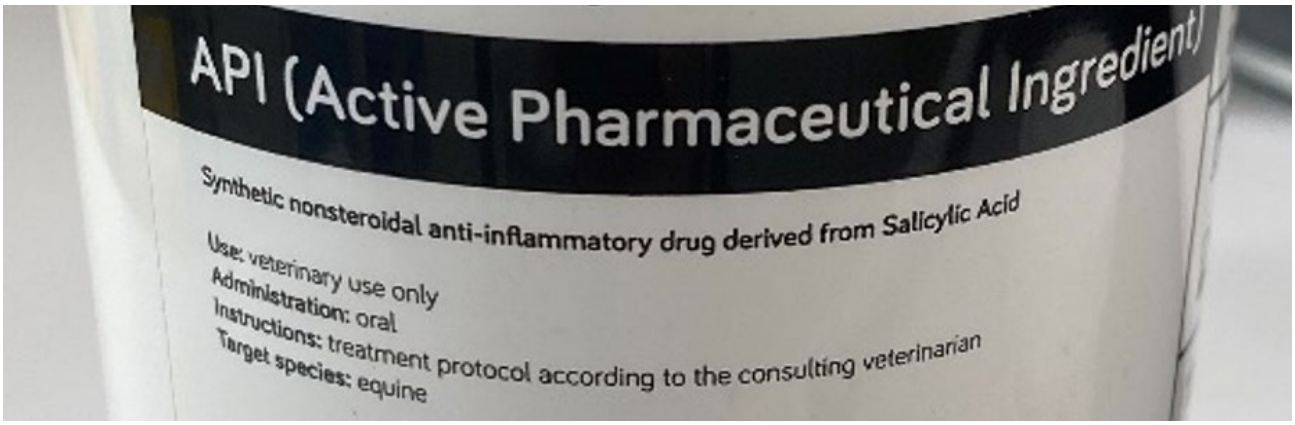

Figure 3: An active pharmaceutical ingredient is intended for the manufacture of medicinal products and must not display any claims to medicinal effects or uses.

4. Mandatory licensing: vaccines, narcotics, medicinal products for livestock

- A special licence issued by the FSVO (IVI) is required for the import of veterinary vaccines. Further information is available on the IVI website.
- A narcotics import licence issued by Swissmedic is required for every import of a narcotic substance. Further information is available on the Swissmedic website.
- A special licence issued by Swissmedic is required for the import of veterinary medicines intended for use in livestock. Further information is available in the Swissmedic guidance document on special licences.
- The import of narcotics for use in livestock accordingly requires two licences (an import licence for narcotics plus a special licence).

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- It is not possible to reassign imported veterinary medicines to a different category. In exceptional circumstances this can be done on the basis of a special licence.

Remark: *Is the imported product intended only for use in pets but authorised for pets and livestock? A written confirmation from the Swiss veterinarian that the medicinal product will only be used for pets can simplify the customs clearance process if it means that the customs authority does not need to investigate whether a special licence has been issued or is in fact even necessary.*

5. Wholesalers

The veterinarian must ensure that medicinal products are obtained from legal sources. If the product is obtained through a wholesaler in Switzerland or abroad, the wholesaler must have the corresponding licence in the respective country. In general, however, foreign wholesalers are not subject to Swiss therapeutic products legislation.
The primary responsibility lies with the veterinarian who places the order with a domestic or foreign wholesaler. For this reason it is extremely important to obtain comprehensive information before ordering.

6. Cross-border activities

Veterinarians who carry out their profession on both sides of the border in accordance with current international agreements may import and export ready-to-use medicinal products in small quantities without a licence insofar as this is indispensable for the practising of their profession (see the information sheet “Self-employed veterinary activity across borders” issued by the FSVO).

7. Suspected illegal medicinal products

Healthcare professionals play an important role in interrupting illegal supply chains. Dubious offers or suspicious products should be reported.

- Veterinarians are also required to report any suspicion of illegal trade in therapeutic products to Swissmedic (Art. 59 para. 3bis of the Therapeutic Products Act; SR 812.21).
- More information can be found on the Medicrime site operated by Swissmedic.

Change history

Version	Valid and binding from	Description, comments (by author)	Author’s initials
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