

The Medicine Hub – Frequently Asked Questions

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About the hub

What is the Medicine Hub?

It is a web based tool that will enable dairy, beef and sheep producers to record antibiotic usage data and, optionally, other medicine use on their enterprise.

When will the Medicine Hub be available to use?

The Medicine Hub is now live and can be accessed via the following link:-
<https://medicinehub.org.uk/>

Why was the Medicine Hub created?

Antibiotic resistance in both human and animal health is a real threat resulting in increased political and consumer pressure to protect the efficacy of the antibiotics we have. This means that the livestock sectors need to have robust evidence demonstrating how they use antibiotics and to be able to demonstrate that they are using them responsibly. Demonstrating responsible antibiotic use will promote the reputation of our industry, the products we produce and ultimately support trade.

What are the capabilities of the Medicine Hub?

The Medicine Hub is a database that can collate data on medicine use in cattle and sheep, and produce reports to allow producers, or an authorised third party, such as your vet, to compare it anonymously with others of the same enterprise type in the database.

Medicine use data can be entered in a number of ways such as the total amount of a product used or as individual or group treatments.

Reports can be produced on an individual enterprise basis or for a group of enterprises. Users cannot access other individual producers' data without their explicit consent.

Mechanisms are being developed that will allow data to be imported from external data sources, such as farm software systems.

How is the Medicine Hub used and who can use it?

I am from Scotland/Northern Ireland/Wales/Channel Islands/Isle of Man, will I be able to use the Medicine Hub?

Yes, you will be able register, upload data and see reports, in the same way as producers from England.

I am a vet, will I be able to use the Medicine Hub?

If your client has given you permission to view, enter or submit data on their behalf via the Medicine Hub, you will receive an email notifying you and will be able to register for an account and enter data.

We are working on a number of ways to refine the import of data from vet practice management systems. One of these systems will be provided by Vet Impress (vetimpress.com).

I have several holdings, can my farm managers at each holding use the Medicine Hub?

The owner is responsible for ensuring the data are entered correctly and it is important that the owner has control of who has access, and who enters data that they are responsible for. As the owner, you will be able to allow your farm managers to have access to the system to view or enter data.

About your data

How will my data be used and who will see it?

Producers have control of their own identifiable farm level data and who has permission to see it. AHDB reserves the right to anonymise and aggregate farmers' data for a number of purposes, chiefly national reporting of usage data, benchmarking within the system and also for research purposes where this is for the benefit of the industry.

At a national level all data entered into the hub will contribute to reporting of antibiotic use across the relevant sectors on an anonymised, aggregated basis. This anonymised and aggregated data will be used to assist stakeholder organisations such as the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), other UK government agencies or UK universities undertaking non-commercial research, with understanding, decision-making and policy formulation.

AHDB has commissioned work to recommend how permissions around data sharing both with, and by, the medicine hub should be managed.

Can I upload individual farmer's data on their behalf?

Data for individual farms can be uploaded by the producer or their nominated third party.

Can I separate out different types of livestock on my farm?

Initially you will need to create different enterprises for sheep, beef and dairy. Medicine use for each type of livestock can then be entered to the appropriate enterprise.

What data will I need to enter on the Medicine Hub?

You will need to enter farm details and enterprise type, along with user contact details.

You will need to enter medicine use information:

- the name of all the medicines you have used during the year¹
- the amount used of each medicine during the year
- There is also the option to add the age of animals treated and the reason for treatment. If you would like to use the Medicine Hub as a full medicine book, you will need to enter individual or group treatments as you do in standard medicine books.

If vet practice management data are used, medicines purchased will be recorded. This can then be allocated to different enterprises or remain 'in stock', if not used.

In addition, animal population data will also be needed:

- **Dairy:**
Number of adult dairy cows

¹ annual submission will be used initially although it is anticipated more frequent uploads may be introduced at a later date.

- **Sheep:**
 - Number of lambs finished
 - Number of lambs sold or retained for breeding
 - Number of adult ewes put to the ram

 - Number of rams used for breeding

 - Number of store lambs purchased during the year
- **Beef:**
 - Number of cows or heifers put to the bull
 - Number and age of animals bought, sold or remaining on farm during the year

Currently the Medicine Hub cannot access BCMS or APHIS for details of cattle numbers on farm during the reporting period, but we are working on this as this would enable automatic data entry of cattle numbers. We recommend for cattle numbers that you contact the relevant organisation ([CTS Web Service user ID and password request form](#)) as it can take a couple of weeks for this information to come through.

What units is antibiotic use recorded in and how does this apply to my farm?

Farm level antibiotic use calculation is complicated given animal movement on and off the farm as well as age variations and changes over the year. The calculation uses metrics recommended by the former Cattle Health & Welfare Group and the Sheep Antibiotic Guardian Group (<https://ahdb.org.uk/cattle-health-and-welfare-group-chawg> & <https://ahdb.org.uk/sheep-health-and-welfare-group-shawg>). In simple terms, the metrics are based on the total amount of antibiotic active ingredient used related to the estimated weight of livestock on the farm. Because these are farm level calculations, in many cases they will be different to the way we calculate the national figure. For that reason, extreme care is needed in comparing farm level data against the national figure and we do not recommend that without expert interpretation.

How do I know the data are true and accurate?

The system will work best where farmers/third parties take care to ensure data entered are correct. AHDB will review the data for errors, such as using an incorrect quantity unit (e.g., litres rather than ml for injections), and over time will compare individual enterprises to look for unusual results. Having run the successful pig system (eMB-pigs) for several years, we have experience in this area. We are aware that vet entered data may vary from farm use data, but we will group data that are entered by each route for comparisons.

The Medicine Hub will also provide trend graphs for the farmer before submission, and reminders of the animal population data entered in earlier returns, to allow the farmer to spot mistakes and correct them.

In time, once the Livestock Information Service (LIS) and other national traceability systems are rolled out, we will be able to access these to either check or import animal numbers.

Benchmarking and multiple data sets

Will benchmarking comply with GDPR rules?

GDPR compliance is our priority. We will not allow any benchmarking that does not comply with GDPR legislation.

Can I benchmark my data against other units? (individual unit)

You will be able to compare your data against similar enterprises and method of data entry (e.g. usage on farm or vet prescription data). There will be a minimum number of farms with that enterprise type required to have entered data for the time period to allow comparison. The data for those units (minimum 50) will then be aggregated and this minimum number ensures anonymity.

Can I upload entire data sets from multiple units?

We have developed a mechanism that will allow datasets to be uploaded. This requires the data to be in a standard format, for example, using a standard medicine list provided by the VMD and standard units of measurement. The owner of the dataset would need to update their software to use the API.

We are asking that dataset providers check whether medicines in their systems are identified using the VMD identifiers; this will facilitate upload and will reduce the need for duplicate data entry. We would also welcome feedback on the API, to aid us in identifying areas for improvement.

Can I benchmark my data set? (multiple units)

Users with multiple enterprises will be able to produce a “Group Report” which will allow them to compare their enterprises against each other by sector. This report will also provide a group antibiotic usage figure for each sector, which could be compared against the national figure for that sector.

Can devolved nations upload their data via ScotEID or EIDCymru?

These systems do not collect medicine usage data, however it would be useful to link to them to access cattle and potentially sheep population data.

Can devolved nations benchmark their uploaded data?

It may be possible to calculate national usage figures by sector and potentially enterprise type as long as the data are available. However, we have to consider carefully how to handle such data and would not automatically make this available.

Costs

What will it cost me to use the Medicine Hub?

AHDB does not anticipate charging for using the Medicine Hub. If you chose a third party provider to enter data for you, they may charge for that service.

How could producers demonstrate to Assurance Schemes that they have shared data with the Medicine Hub?

Accessing data

Currently there is no requirement to enter data into the Medicine Hub to meet any farm assurance standards for dairy, beef or lamb producers, however it is part of the Pork standard for Red Tractor and QMS assurance schemes. Producers who have entered the data will be able provide a report to their farm assurance assessor to demonstrate compliance with the assurance standards.

Further queries and questions

I have a comment/question that has not been answered, how can I find out more information?

You can contact the Medicine Hub team by either emailing medicinehub@ahdb.org.uk or calling 02477 719 414.