



MEDIA RELEASE

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Green Light For Exemption Work Welcomed

The animal health industry has welcomed the government's acceptance that there are merits in considering a proposal to exempt many animal health products from the HSNO Act.

Agcarm chief executive Graeme Peters said that farmers, vets, pet owners, and makers of animal medicines would be greatly encouraged by Environment Minister Nick Smith's recent comments.

Agcarm, Federated Farmers, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, and ARPPA have made a joint case for exempting many animal health products from the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. Human medicines sold in small pack sizes are already exempt.

Speaking at the Agcarm annual conference, the Minister said officials had advised him that there were merits in considering the joint proposal for an exemption in more detail. He wanted to ensure that the regulatory compliance burden was reduced and had instructed Ministry for the Environment officials to look into the proposed exemption as well as any proposed regulatory change that is needed.

"It's very encouraging that the Minister has accepted that the industry has made a valid case worth exploring as it shows the government is listening for ideas and willing to implement them if they stack up," Mr Peters said.

"Animal medicines are already regulated by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act. They do not need to be regulated by the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act.

"The double regulation of animal medicines is over the top and adds unnecessary compliance costs, which in turn is limiting innovation, and the range of treatments available in New Zealand. The HSNO Act is also creating labelling headaches because it requires the addition of unnecessary health and safety information on already crowded labels," Mr Peters said.

In addition to having concern for risks to animal welfare, market access and agricultural security, and domestic food residue standards, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority must take into account any risks to public health when assessing veterinary medicines. The Food Safety Authority has a robust system which includes compliance audits. These responsibilities are sufficient to cover any concerns about the effects of animal medicines on people.

“A sensible outcome is an exemption across the vast bulk of medicines such as antibiotics, vaccines, surgical drugs, management of internal parasites, and flea treatments for cats and dogs,” said Mr Peters.

“However, we recognize that some products used on farm animals could be hazardous if used improperly. These are mainly bulk drench insecticides used in a dispersive manner and these should not be exempted,” he said.

As a first step, the Environmental Risk Management Authority and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority will do a study on the various types of animal health products and the risks they pose, and report back to MfE.

“A commitment from ERMA, the NZFSA, and MfE to work together to study an exemption is very positive progress and should be applauded,” Mr Peters said.

Agcarm is the industry association of companies which manufacture, distribute and sell products that keep animals healthy and crops thriving. Member companies are committed to ensuring that these products are used safely, effectively and sustainably

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