



Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
HM Paymaster General
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

17 December 2025

Dear Minister,

VETERINARY MEDICINE SUPPLY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your letter dated 15 December 2025, relating to the supply of veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee considered this letter at its meeting on 17 December 2025.

We are grateful for your response and we intend to undertake further scrutiny of the supply of veterinary medicines to Northern Ireland in 2026. In the meantime, however, we would like to request further clarification on a number of issues raised by your letter:

- a. You state that you “currently do not have evidence to suggest that there will be significant price increases as a result of re-routing.” However, what will be the economic cost to the UK of the departure from the established approach of veterinary medicines being supplied to Northern Ireland via Great Britain? What is your response to the Committee’s question on Article 16 of the Protocol?
- b. We note your statement that “Our understanding of the situation is that only two of the six wholesalers serving Northern Ireland would continue to trade in Northern Ireland” but also that “24 wholesalers are registered in Northern Ireland (a list available here) and we expect those to continue to operate in Northern Ireland.” Please could you clarify how many veterinary medicine wholesalers will serve Northern Ireland after the grace period?
- c. You state that you “are aware of several online pharmacies setting up to offer services in Northern Ireland and some of those have already announced this publicly.” Where will the online pharmacies being set up to serve Northern Ireland be based?
- d. We note your statement that “All types of products and, in exceptional circumstances, pack sizes can be considered for this scheme, including products prescribed by SQPs [Specially Qualified Persons].” Will SQPs be able to prescribe POM-VPS medicines supplied into Northern Ireland under the Veterinary Medicines Health Situation Scheme?
- e. We would be grateful for a response to the Committee’s question on whether the Government is confident that Northern Ireland’s veterinary sector has sufficient capacity



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to absorb the additional responsibilities presented by the Internal Market Scheme and Health Situation Scheme.

We would be grateful for a response to these issues by 22 January 2026.

I am copying this letter to Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Tonia Antoniazzi MP, Chair of the Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee; Ciara Ferguson MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee; Andrew Muir MLA, Minister of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland, and Robbie Butler MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE KC,
Chair, Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee