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The Baroness Sheehan
Chair, Environment and Climate Change Committee
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

16 October 2026

Dear Lady Sheehan

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your Committee on 9 September, and for the Committee's interest in the OEP's role and work. It was very helpful to me, so soon in my time at the OEP, to discuss this with you, and our review of Environment Agency inspections in the waste operations and installations sector in particular. I am pleased the Committee found that informative.

I undertook to provide further information to the Committee on two matters which were raised:

Pet Parasite Medication

We agree with the spirit of your recent report's finding that information on the use and abundance of chemicals should be readily available to those managing the risks and consequences. Your report highlights a gap in relation to pet parasite medication.

Through our work, we have found that the UK has a comprehensive but complex and disparate regulatory framework for managing the risk of chemicals and pesticides to the environment. There are many regulations, which cover a range of different chemical uses and emissions, overseen by different bodies. A single chemical could be regulated under different regimes as a medicine, a veterinary medicine, a biocide and pesticide. Each of these uses falls under different regulations with different risk assessments and protection goals leading to potentially different regulatory outcomes for the same substance.

In our latest progress report, we raise the need for better alignment across bodies working in chemicals including to facilitate data sharing. We recommend that government optimise

the use of resources, expertise and cooperation among the UK bodies performing technical and policy work on chemicals. This should include improving the sharing, harmonisation and use of data across departments, such as through a 'one substance, one assessment' approach.

On your specific question, the regulation of veterinary medicines such as for flea or tick treatments is set out in the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013. These Regulations require manufacturers, wholesalers and vets to keep records of the quantity of product supplied. As your recent report found, there is no provision in these regulations for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) to require sales and supply data be provided to it outside of its on-site inspections. Your report notes that this differs from the reporting rules which apply to antibiotic veterinary medicines.

We are not aware of any other law that requires data to be generally made available where chemicals have been shown to be harmful to the environment. I would note, however, that the supply data you refer to may be considered to be environmental information for the purposes of the Environmental Information Regulations. This may provide a route for the public to request, and the VMD to consider providing, the data it does hold.

For completeness, I would note that we have recently received complaints that relate to broader matters connected with the regulation of pet parasite medication, which we are currently assessing through our complaints process.

Targets relating to species

Three species-related targets have been set in law under the Environment Act: to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030; to increase species abundance by 2042 so that it is greater than in 2022 and at least 10% greater than in 2030; and to reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042 compared with 2022.

In our latest progress report, we assess the Government's prospects of meeting the 2030 species abundance target to be partially on track. Whilst the long-term decline in species abundance in England has begun to level off in recent years, the index fluctuates – there is a decline in the latest year of data – and factors such as extreme weather can influence year-to-year changes. Because of this, we are concerned that the way the target is measured may not, on its own, demonstrate that the underlying long-term decline has been halted in a meaningful and sustained way.

Our assessment that the target is partially on track reflects our view that Government has not demonstrated how its planned actions collectively add up to delivery of the target. Because of the time needed for interventions to affect species populations, our assessment depends largely on trends and action already under way.

We assess both longer-term targets to be largely off track. Increasing species abundance and reducing extinction risk will require more than stabilising recent trends. It will depend on sufficiently ambitious, spatially targeted and well-resourced delivery plans, including effective nature-friendly farming, restoration and creation of wildlife-rich habitats, improved condition of protected sites, and action in freshwater and marine environments. We have not yet seen enough evidence that current plans and actions add up to the scale and pace

of change needed. In particular, the new statutory species targets delivery plan published alongside Government's refreshed Environmental Improvement Plan in 2025 does not give us greater confidence that the longer-term targets can be met. We will update our assessment in our next progress report, including in light of the early implementation of EIP25, but at this stage we do not expect a substantial change in our view.

I hope this additional information is helpful to the Committee and look forward to our future discussions on these and other important matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dame Helen Ghosh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dame Helen Ghosh
Chair, Office for Environmental Protection