

Off Label Drug Use

Sometimes your veterinary surgeon may select a medicine for your horse that does not have a UK licence either for that use, or in the equine species. This does not mean that the drug is not safe, it may just mean that the company making it do not see it as commercially viable to obtain the UK licence for horses. However, it does mean that the medicine has not been through the rigorous testing protocols required by the UK authorities (although frequently it may have passed testing in other countries). In the majority of cases the drug will have been used previously and will have shown to be safe and effective in a clinical setting.

The use of off label drugs may be necessary when licensed medicines are not available, but there are certain risks involved. Drugs can be metabolised differently in different species, so although it may be safe in one species it can be harmful in another, or the dose required may be different. The same goes for use of human drugs in animals. It is down to the prescribing veterinary surgeon to use their clinical knowledge and experience to weigh up the risk versus the benefit of the treatment in each case.

Please be aware that we do regularly use drugs “off label” at Abbey Equine Clinic. We will discuss any potential risks with you before dispensing them.