

Policy Brief:

Securing trust in veterinary medicines in Asia-Pacific: tackling substandard and falsified products



Executive summary

Substandard and falsified veterinary products (SFVPs) pose a serious threat to animal and public health, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. The circulation of these products undermines disease control, contributes to antimicrobial resistance, and weakens trust in veterinary medicines.

To address this issue, the **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** is piloting an initiative called **VSAFE**.

It aims to pilot with countries the specific requirement for the development an online system that can help countries to facilitate information sharing among WOAH Members.

Through this initiative, WOAH urges Animal Health Services to join VSAFE- pilot: a **pilot designed to receive notifications of SFVPs, facilitate their identification, and support the removal of such products from circulation**. This effort was supported through the first regional workshop on SFVPs in Asia and the Pacific, co-funded by the European Union and the UK Fleming Fund.

WOAH also calls on Members to enhance national regulations, collaborate with enforcement agencies, and raise awareness to effectively combat SFVPs and protect animal health.

Definition of SFVPs

SFVPs refer to:



Substandard veterinary products:

Veterinary products that do not meet quality standards,



Falsified veterinary products:

Unauthorised Veterinary whose identity is deliberately or fraudulently misrepresented.



World Organisation
for Animal Health



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Key facts

- **SFVPs are a major threat to animal health and welfare**, as well as public health.
- The **use of SFVPs results in higher animal mortality and prolonged infections**. It also contributes to the emergence of drug-resistant pathogens which drive the rise of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and jeopardises food safety, food security, and global health security.
- A significant proportion of veterinary products circulating in **Asia and the Pacific region do not meet quality standards, posing serious risks to health systems**.
- **SFVPs undermine trust in veterinary medicines**, disrupt markets, and strain farmers and governments financially. Their circulation erodes confidence in products like vaccines, a problem worsened by misinformation, **ultimately weakening animal health management efforts**.
- **Ensuring access to quality-assured veterinary medicines** is essential to the sustainability of animal health systems and effective One Health implementation.

SFVPs: a Global Issue Requiring Urgent Action

SFVPs are widely available due to limited regulatory enforcement, illegal distribution channels, and limited access to genuine products. In 2017, 3% of veterinary products circulating worldwide were estimated to be illegal. Another study estimated that **52% of the 1,246 veterinary medicines collected for quality testing in Asia and Africa were SFVPs²**.

Moreover, the rapid development of online sales has further complexified efforts to control the circulation of SFVPs, increasing the risk of unregulated and dangerous products entering supply chains.

Urgent action must be taken. Drug regulatory and veterinary authorities must work together to implement stricter regulations, improve surveillance, and enhance cross-sector collaboration to combat SFVPs effectively.

VSAFE-pilot: A Key Initiative to address SFVPs

To prevent the circulation and use of SFVPs, WOAHA has launched the pilot Monitoring and Surveillance System for Substandard and Falsified Veterinary Products (VSAFE-pilot). It helps Animal Health Services identify and eliminate SFVPs. This initiative is crucial for:

- **Supporting Members' needs** for the quality management of veterinary medicinal products.
- **Enhancing national surveillance** by providing a mechanism for reporting and analysing SFVP incidents.
- **Improving coordination** between Animal Health Services and regulatory authorities and thus strengthening regulatory enforcement and response.
- **Facilitating information sharing** at national, regional, and global levels to address SFVPs systematically.

- **Collecting data** to assess the scope of SFVP circulation at national and regional levels. A dashboard accessible to WOAHA Members shows reported incidents of SFVPs at different geographical levels.



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Fostering VSAFE-pilot Engagement: Asia-Pacific's First SFVP Workshop

Recognising the urgency of tackling SFVPs, WOAHA organised the first regional workshop on SFVPs and VSAFE in 2024 in Bangkok. This workshop was made possible through the "Working Together to Fight Antimicrobial Resistance" project, funded by the European Union and the Fleming Fund. It brought together 41 participants from 24 WOAHA Members in the Asia-Pacific region, including representatives from Veterinary Services and drug regulatory authorities which, in many cases, operate under the Ministry of Health.



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This gathering provided insights and practical tools to strengthen national surveillance and response mechanisms. It reinforced collaboration between key stakeholders such as the World Customs Organization (WCO), INTERPOL, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

It highlighted the need for strong inter-agency coordination, regional cooperation, and continued Veterinary Services engagement to maintain effective national regulations. A key outcome was the expansion of the VSAFE- pilot reporting system, with several new countries joining the outcome of VSAFE- pilot are essential for the optimisation and deployment for the online reporting system- TRUVET'

Policy Recommendations

The control of SFVPs must be an integral part of national animal health strategies. Animal Health Services play a leading role in controlling their circulation and should act in coordination with other national authorities. In addition to the implementation of WOAHP international standards, the following recommendations aim to support effective management of SFVPs in the Asia-Pacific region.

Standards-Based Actions

As described in WOAHP standards, Veterinary Services must:

- **Develop a system for monitoring the quality of veterinary medicinal products** marketed in the country, including surveillance for falsified products³.
- **Ensure that veterinary products are not illegal**, substandard, falsified, or unapproved formulations, and that such products are prevented from entering distribution systems⁴.

Surveillance and Reporting

- **Increase engagement in VSAFE** and actively contribute to monitoring and reporting SFVPs.

Regulation and Enforcement

- **Strengthen national regulations**, as well as their compliance and enforcement, to ensure veterinary products meet quality requirements.
- **Enhance collaboration** with customs, law enforcement, and regulatory authorities to prevent the SFVPs distribution.

Awareness and risk mitigation

- **Raise awareness** among veterinarians, farmers, pharmaceutical suppliers, and the public about the threat posed by SFVPs.
- Make use of **quality-assured vaccines** and minimise dependence on unverified products in the event of outbreaks or supply shortages.

By taking decisive actions, Veterinary and Aquatic Animal Health Services safeguard the integrity of veterinary medicines, which are essential to protecting livelihoods, ensuring the sustainability of animal production systems, and mitigating the threat of AMR. These efforts ultimately contribute to improved animal health and welfare, enhanced public health resilience, and stronger food systems across the Asia-Pacific region.

References

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