



European Medicines Agency must rule on killer drug by November 30. Is Europe closer to saving its vultures and eagles?

Brussels, 22 September 2014 - After months of wrestling, the European Commission has given mandate the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to assess the risks to vulture populations of the use of veterinary medicines containing diclofenac. This represents a major breakthrough and opens the door for the European ban of the killer drug that wiped out entire vulture populations in Asia. Birdlife International and the Vulture Conservation Foundation appeal to all parties involved to submit scientific evidence to the EMA by 10 October 2014.

Diclofenac is a veterinary anti-inflammatory drug that kills vultures and eagles – in India it caused a 99% decline of a number of Vulture species there, before eventually being banned in 4 countries in the region. Quite incredibly, veterinary diclofenac has now been allowed to be used on farm animals in Europe – in Estonia, Italy and Spain for cattle, pigs and horses, and in the Czech Republic and Latvia for horses only. The drug has been marketed by an Italian company named FATRO, and was allowed using loopholes in the EU guidelines to assess risk of non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs.

The European Medicines Agency has now opened a public consultation on the matter, directed at all professional bodies with information about scavenging birds, veterinary practices and the disposal of animal by-products. With this decision, the European Commission acknowledges the facts raised by BirdLife International and the Vulture Conservation Foundation, who are leading an international campaign to ban veterinary *diclofenac* in Europe.

José Tavares, executive director of the VCF states: “It is impossible to leave this drug out there, and it’s the time for the EU to acknowledge the reality on the ground in countries like Italy and Spain. Even if there was a strict veterinary prescription system – and this is not the case – it would still be impossible for the veterinary managing the drug to oversee the disposal of all the dead animals. In Spain when pigs, lambs and goats die in open fields they are often reached by vultures even before farmers are aware of it.”

Iván Ramírez, Head of Conservation for Europe and Central Asia at BirdLife International says, “We welcome the decision, and thank our BirdLife Partners and supporters. Our vulture experts are working on our reply to EMA, but it is crucial that we take any single opportunity to call for the immediate ban of this product. There are safe alternatives^[1] and we have already seen how dangerous veterinary *diclofenac* is for vultures. We won’t stop until a European ban is implemented”.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

Please check BirdLife’s recent video on Vulture poisoning [here](#)

For detailed information on the #banvetdiclofenac campaign please go to [its website](#)

EMA public consultation call can be read [here](#)

Comments on this public consultation should be submitted using the [template](#) provided to vet.guidelines@ema.europa.eu by 10 October 2014

[1] There is a patent-free, non-toxic alternative with the same veterinary effects available (Meloxicam).