



Animal Medicines Australia
ABN 76 116 948 344 | ACN 116 948 344
18 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600, Australia
P: +61 2 6257 9022
animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au

1 February 2024

NSW Environment Protection Authority
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

By email only: plasticsconsultation@epa.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Submission to *NSW Plastics: Next Steps Discussion Paper*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the NSW EPA's *NSW Plastics: Next Steps* discussion paper (the Discussion paper).

Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) is the peak industry association representing the registrants and approval holders of veterinary medicines and animal health products in Australia. They are the local divisions of global innovators, manufacturers, formulators and registrants that supply essential veterinary medicines and animal health products that are critical to supporting Australia's \$34 billion livestock industry and the \$33 billion pet industry. Our members represent more than 90% of registered veterinary medicine sales in Australia.

AMA member companies play a vital role in Australia's food production, agricultural trade and biosecurity preparedness, as well as ensuring the health and wellbeing of our pets, wildlife and competition animals. AMA members develop, register and supply innovative new medicines including vaccines and anti-infection medicines to prevent and control outbreaks of animal disease, as well as medicines and treatments that enable good health and wellbeing, and the production of food and fibre products that are safe for human consumption and use. Healthy animals are much less susceptible to disease and infection, and good animal health is essential to good animal welfare.

Ensuring access to animal health products and maintaining their viability and efficacy during transport, storage and use across Australia in our unique and often extreme environmental conditions is vital to maintaining not only the health and wellbeing of the animals in our care, but also Australia's rigorous biosecurity systems, public health and access to safe, nutritious, affordable food.

Animal Medicines Australia commends the NSW Government's commitment to addressing the impacts of single-use and problematic plastics.

The animal health sector is keen to engage and work collaboratively to address the risks associated with these plastics. Animal Medicines Australia is pleased to provide the following comments on the *NSW Plastics: Next Steps* discussion paper for consideration by the NSW EPA.

Proposed action relating to chemicals such as PFAS in plastic

The Discussion Paper highlights that the NSW EPA plans to take action to phase out certain chemicals such as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in plastic and refers to the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) *Action Plan to Phase Out PFAS in Fibre-Based Food Contact Packaging*.¹ Further clarity regarding the scope and boundaries of this NSW proposal is required.

PFAS are a group of more than 4000 chemicals, which have various properties and uses, including resistance to heat, other chemicals or abrasion and product integrity. This diverse range of chemicals convey a variety of specialist properties for their application and have highly variable toxicity profiles and exposure pathways relevant to human and environmental health.

Clear boundaries and a defined scope for the proposed phase-out are required to avoid potential significant unintended consequences that could arise from a widespread phase-out of such a large group of diverse chemicals. AMA recommends that any action relating to persistent chemicals, including PFAS, is focused on high-risk chemicals and applications.

AMA notes that a number of persistent chemicals, including PFAS, have recently been listed in the *Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS)*, with subsequent restrictions on their import, manufacture and use as industrial chemicals.² Pharmaceuticals, however, including veterinary pharmaceuticals, are excluded from IChEMS as they are regulated separately. Veterinary medicines, including their packaging, are regulated by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). Separate, specialised regulation is essential to effectively manage veterinary chemical products and the specific contexts in which they are used.

It is unclear from the Discussion paper how the action proposed by the NSW EPA will align with global or national actions regarding the management of persistent chemicals, including (for example) the Global Plastics Treaty, the IChEMS framework and APCO activities. AMA encourages the NSW Government to ensure that its activities align with these existing frameworks.

National harmonisation of single-use plastic phase-outs

AMA and our members are committed to reducing the use of unnecessary plastic packaging where possible throughout the animal health product supply chain. The unique requirements for safe transport of veterinary medicines, especially, necessitates careful consideration of all potential options for replacement of specific packaging types.

The Discussion paper highlights the NSW Government's intention to address problematic and single-use plastics via a series of phase-outs, while aligning with phase-outs in other jurisdictions, where appropriate. AMA supports the NSW Government's proposal to ensure, where appropriate, national consistency regarding the phasing out of plastic packaging.

In the case of veterinary pharmaceutical products, national consistency is essential for ensuring rapid, reliable transport nation-wide to address animal health and welfare concerns and ensure that food safety and biosecurity threats can be appropriately managed.

Changes to the use of plastics in the veterinary pharmaceutical supply chain in a single jurisdiction, such as NSW, could have detrimental impacts on the national supply chain as veterinary medicines are regulated at the federal level and distributed across state and territory borders. Products may become unavailable if new regulations are imposed in one jurisdiction and not others, posing significant risks to

¹ APCO Action Plan to Phase Out PFAS in Fibre-Based Food Contact Packaging;
<https://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/Action%20Plan%20to%20Phase%20Out%20PFAS%20in%20Fibre-Based%20Food%20Contact%20Packaging>

² Australian Government DCCEEW; Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard – IChEMS;
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/chemicals-management/national-standard>

animal health and welfare, agricultural production, human health and food safety. To ensure the costs and benefits associated with any new regulations on plastics are shared across the Australian marketplace and do not result in unintended negative consequences, regulations that affect the pharmaceutical supply chain must be consistent nationwide and informed by significant industry consultation.

AMA recommends consideration of recommendations by APCO when developing plans to phase out certain plastics. The APCO guidance generally considers different commodity sectors, including the pharmaceutical sector, and makes recommendations regarding exemptions or timeframes for phase-outs in consultation with affected industries.

In Summary:

Animal Medicines Australia commends the NSW Government's commitment to addressing the impacts of single-use and 'problematic plastics.

AMA recommends that the NSW EPA undertake extensive consultation with relevant industries when considering regulatory action regarding chemicals including PFAS to reduce the chance of unintended adverse impacts on various aspects of specialised pharmaceutical manufacturing systems and supply chains, including packaging, delivery devices, equipment used in pharmaceutical manufacturing processes and reagents required for diagnostic and quality control procedures.

AMA opposes:

- AMA does not support the blanket phase-out of chemicals, such as PFAS. A blanket phase-out will have significant consequences across many essential products and industries. AMA encourages further consultation with all affected industries by the NSW Government prior to adopting this proposal. PFAS chemicals have widely differing toxicity profiles and effective regulation should reflect the actual risks posed by that particular PFAS molecule.

AMA supports:

- AMA supports the national harmonisation of single-use plastic replacements and phase-outs to ensure unintended adverse consequences are avoided.

If we can provide further information at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Katie Asplin

Director, Animal Health Stewardship