November 4, 2010

Meghan Hessenauer  
Engineering and Analysis Division (4303T)  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20460

RE: Docket Number [FRL-9197-7], “Best Management Practices for Unused Pharmaceuticals at Health Care Facilities”

Dear Ms. Hessenauer:

I am writing on behalf of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), established in 1863 and the largest veterinary medical association in the world. As a not-for-profit association established to advance the science and art of veterinary medicine, the AVMA is the recognized national voice for the veterinary profession. The association’s more than 80,000 members comprise approximately 83% of U.S. veterinarians, who are involved in a myriad of areas of veterinary medical practice including private, corporate, academic, industrial, governmental, military, and public health services.

The AVMA applauds the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its efforts in creating the “Guidance Document: Best Management Practices for Unused Pharmaceuticals at Health Care Facilities,” which was announced in the recently published Federal Register item [FRL-9197-7]. The Guidance, which is organized, comprehensive, and user friendly, will be a useful resource for the veterinary profession. Environmental responsibility is important to the AVMA. As part of this, the AVMA supports education of and understanding by veterinarians and the public regarding control and prevention of adverse environmental impacts of pharmaceutical use. In addition the AVMA encourages its members to use scientifically-based, environmentally sensitive practices to ensure a viable ecosystem for future generations.

The veterinary profession is a minimal contributor of pharmaceutical waste in water systems. Nonetheless, in 2009 the AVMA worked closely with the EPA to establish the AVMA’s “Best Management Practices for Pharmaceutical Disposal” (http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/pharmaceutical_disposal.asp), which provides an additional resource and model for veterinary practices to further reduce pharmaceutical waste generation. The AVMA BMP was adopted over a year ago and while some of the details of the EPA Guidance are not readily applicable to the veterinary profession, it aligns well with the newly developed EPA Guidance. The AVMA further appreciates the EPA’s discussions on medical, dual, and mixed wastes, as well as the Agency’s incorporation of guidance on proper disposal of controlled
substances in accordance with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) regulations.

The AVMA feels that it is incumbent upon the veterinarian who is an employer to inform all employees or volunteers regarding workplace hazards that may affect their health. Information within the EPA Guidance may enhance many aspects of hazard communications within practices. Of particular interest from a proactive perspective are the sections in which the EPA recommends that chemotherapeutics and products listed as hazardous by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) be handled as Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) regulated items.

Although most private veterinary practices are conditionally exempt small quantity generators (CESQG) under the RCRA, the expanded detail and clarification offered by the EPA Guidance on hazardous pharmaceuticals are extremely beneficial. Even though only a small percentage of drugs are regulated as hazardous, considerable time and resources are needed to develop and maintain proper hazard communications and waste management programs for them. It is important to note that the AVMA convened a Task Force on AVMA National Hazardous Waste Product Database to consider the feasibility of creating and maintaining a national hazardous waste product database for the veterinary profession. The report of the Task Force will be provided to the AVMA Executive Board in the near future.

Suggestions for possible inclusion in the EPA Guidance include:

- Consider incorporating a section to educate veterinary clients on the proper disposal of veterinary pharmaceuticals in their possession.
- Consider a discussion of how to maintain the identification of a container's contents or previous contents when disposing of the container.
- Consider a discussion on the Proposed Rule [EPA–HQ–RCRA–2007–0932], "Amendment to the Universal Waste Rule: Addition of Pharmaceuticals," if enacted. Ideally, this might include a comparison between the old and new regulations and a potential question and answer section.

In summary, the AVMA believes that the EPA's "Guidance Document: Best Management Practices for Unused Pharmaceuticals at Health Care Facilities" will be a valuable resource for the veterinary profession. We look forward to a continuing dialogue and are willing to serve as a resource to the EPA on this and other important issues regarding the health of our environment. For additional information, please contact Dr. Kristi Henderson (khenderson@avma.org; 847-285-6651).

Sincerely,

W. Ron DeHaven, DVM, MBA
CEO and Executive Vice President
American Veterinary Medical Association

Cc: Dr. Janet Goodwin, Technology and Statistics Branch Chief, Engineering & Analysis Division, U. S. EPA