

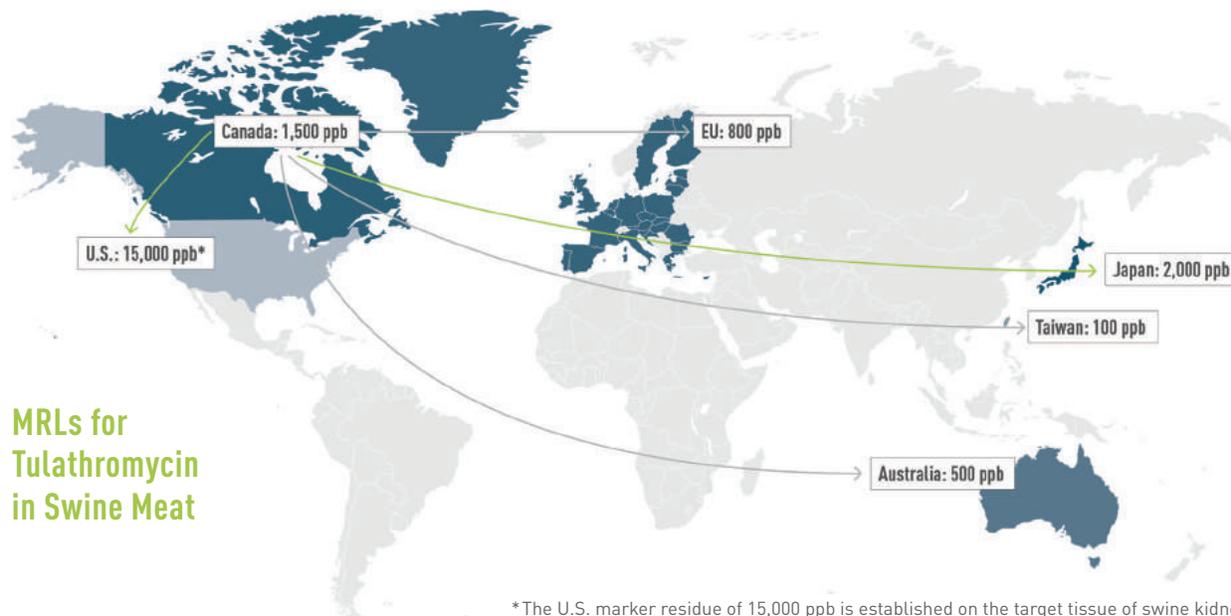
Veterinary Drug MRLs — A Global Perspective

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Veterinary drug maximum residue levels (MRLs) are a measure of the maximum concentration of residue resulting from the legally permitted or recognized as acceptable use of a veterinary drug in food. MRLs are also trading standards. This article provides an overview of the regulations that govern veterinary drug MRLs. It looks at MRL violations across four countries over a one-year period, and summarizes the regulatory deferral paths for countries around the globe.

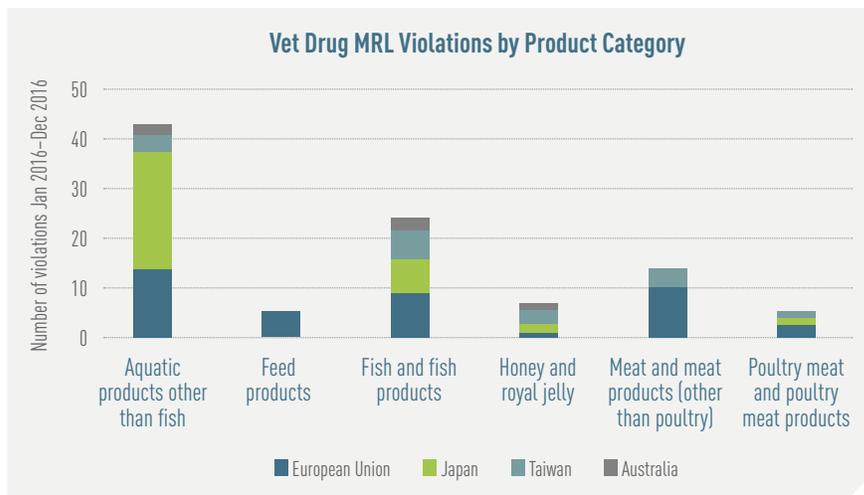
The global trade of animal-based commodities continues to rise. An increasing world population, demand for protein-rich foods, and improved infrastructure and cold storage capabilities strengthen this trend. As trade grows, it is increasingly important for industry to understand and comply with various markets' sanitary standards. Maximum residue levels (MRLs) for veterinary drugs need to be considered when importing or exporting animal products. Regulations between countries are frequently different, resulting in barriers to trade.

The potential trade impact of regulatory misalignment is evident when examining MRLs for a specific substance. The graphic below shows permissible residue levels for the antibiotic tulathromycin in swine meat. Canada has an MRL established at 1,500 parts per billion (ppb), which is less restrictive than the corresponding tolerances maintained in the U.S. and Japan. If applied legally, Canadian pork producers should not expect issues exporting to these markets. The EU, Taiwan, and Australia, however, maintain an MRL more restrictive than Canada. Canadian exporters would need to understand foreign veterinary drug MRL regulations and plan accordingly to avoid violations in these markets.



Failure to comply with an importing country's veterinary drug MRL regulation may result in a violation and consequences for the shipper, exporter, or industry. The severity of the violation depends on the importing market and the residues detected. Animal products may be detained, destroyed, or flagged for increased testing in the future. Repeated or severe violations can result in the temporary closure of a market.

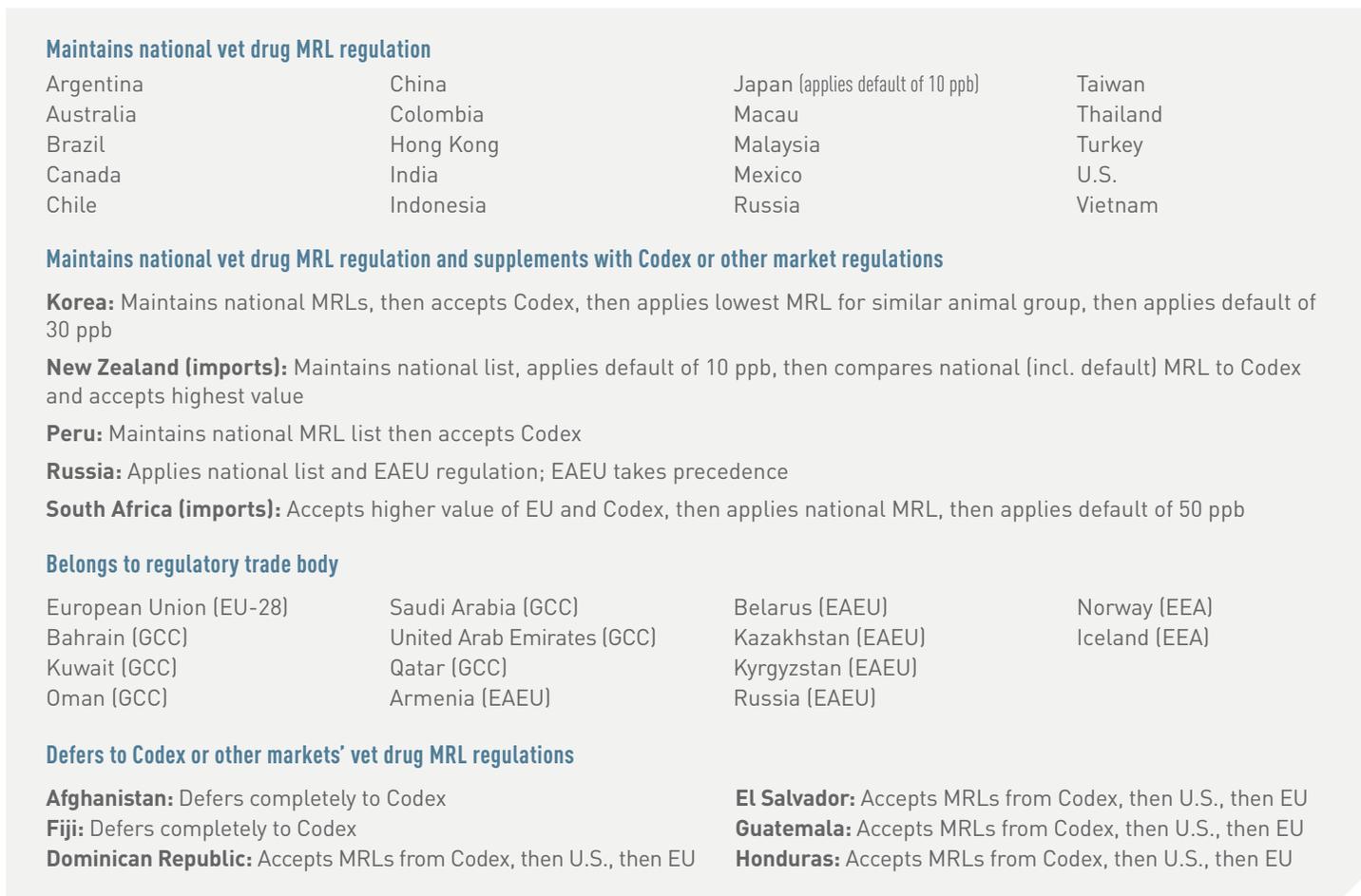
The graph to the right depicts the number of veterinary drug MRL violations occurring in major markets over the past year. Non-compliance was highest for aquatic products, fish products, and meat (non-poultry) products. Additionally, Taiwan, Japan, and the EU all reported relatively high numbers of violations for honey.



To avoid costly violations, it is important for industry to understand how veterinary drug MRLs are regulated in importing countries. Regulatory schemes can be characterized by four distinct approaches:

- » **Maintains national vet drug MRL regulation:** Many markets choose to maintain a national veterinary drug MRL regulation. Governments may consider MRLs established by the international standards body, Codex Alimentarius, but regulations generally tend to reflect domestic needs and regulatory practices.
- » **Maintains national vet drug MRL regulation and supplements with Codex or other market regulations:** Some countries maintain a national MRL list to accommodate domestic needs, but also incorporate Codex or other markets' standards for trade purposes.
- » **Belongs to regulatory trade body:** The European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) maintain veterinary drug MRL standards. Regulations apply to member countries.
- » **Defers to Codex or other markets' vet drug MRL regulations:** Countries that have not adopted a national regulation often defer to Codex for vet drug MRLs and may combine this with the market regulations of their primary trading partners.

The following chart illustrates the various veterinary drug MRL regulations used in countries around the globe.



Veterinary drug MRL misalignment continues to complicate the trade of animal-based products. By understanding how these sanitary standards are regulated in markets around the globe, industry can better evaluate trade opportunities and reduce their risk of non-compliance.

Veterinary drug MRL standards can be accessed through BCGlobal, a portal into global regulations affecting food, beverage, and agricultural products. It brings together Bryant Christie Inc.'s Global MRL Database for pesticide and veterinary drug information, and the Food Additive Database for maximum use level regulations. Updated daily, BCGlobal provides users with a one-stop, online regulatory resource that helps ensure compliance with import requirements.



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Ann Stevenson is a Manager of Regulatory Databases for BCI's Regulatory Data team. She and a team of analysts closely monitor for changes in maximum residue level (MRL) and food additive policy, ensuring that BCGlobal products are up-to-date and accurate.

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