

Vets urged to play their part during World Antibiotic Awareness Week

November 12-18 is World Antibiotic Awareness Week and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is calling on vets to handle and administer antibiotics with care

Being in contact with both animals and farmers, vets are on the frontline in the battle against antimicrobial resistance (AMR), according to the OIE. It says that tackling pathogen resistance to antimicrobials is a priority for the organisation, citing misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in animals, humans or plants as a major factor driving the emergence and development of AMR. Below, the OIE outlines best practice for all vets when dealing with antimicrobials and antibiotics.

WHEN AND HOW SHOULD ANTIMICROBIALS BE USED?

- Only after a clinical examination of the animal(s) by a veterinarian or trained animal health professional.
- Only when necessary, taking into consideration the OIE List of Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance.
- Only in addition to, and never in replacement of, good animal husbandry practices, hygiene, biosecurity and vaccination programmes.
- Only by making an appropriate choice of antimicrobial agent based on clinical experience and diagnostic laboratory information when possible.
- Always in addition to detailed information on treatment protocols and withdrawal times.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE ANTIMICROBIAL?

Take into account:

- Farm records of previous antimicrobial use and epidemiological history of the farm;
- Clinical experience and diagnostic insight;
- Diagnostic laboratory information when available (culture and sensitivity testing);
- Pharmacodynamics (activity against pathogens involved);
- Pharmacokinetics (tissue distribution, efficacy at infection site); and
- The OIE list of antimicrobials of veterinary importance when choosing your treatment.

WHAT TO DO IF FIRST-LINE TREATMENT FAILS?

- Second-line treatment should be based on results of diagnostic tests including sensitivity testing.
- In the absence of test results a different class or sub-class should be used.

CAN COMBINATIONS OF ANTIMICROBIALS BE USED?

- Only if supported by scientific evidence.

WHAT SHOULD BE WRITTEN ON THE PRESCRIPTION FOR ANTIMICROBIALS?

- Dosage regimen (dose, treatment intervals, duration of treatment).
- Withdrawal periods for meat and milk.

- Amount of antimicrobial (to be) provided, depending on dosage and number of animals.
- Labelling of all veterinary drugs supplied.

WHEN IS EXTRA-LABEL OR OFF-LABEL ANTIMICROBIAL USE ALLOWED?

- In agreement with national legislation.
- When appropriate registered product isn't available.
- With client's informed consent.

It is the vet's responsibility to define the conditions of responsible use, including the dosage regimes, route of administration and withdrawal period, in these cases taking into account recommendations of the OIE List.

WHAT DATA SHOULD BE RECORDED BY THE VET?

- Quantities of antimicrobials used per animal species.
- Details of all antimicrobials supplied to each farm.
- Treatment schedules (including animal ID and withdrawal period).
- Antimicrobial susceptibility data.
- Comments concerning the response of animals to treatment.
- Adverse reactions including lack of response due to antimicrobial resistance.

FOR MORE DETAILS, REFER TO THE OIE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS:

- Article 6.9.6. *Responsibilities of veterinarians of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code.*
- Article 6.2.7. *Responsibilities of veterinarians and other aquatic animal health professionals of the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code.*
- OIE List of Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance.

HOW IS AMR THREATENING US?

- Once bacteria are resistant, the antimicrobial agent (or medicine) is ineffective and can no longer help to control or treat diseases. This phenomenon is called antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- AMR is a threat to the health and welfare of animals, whether aquatic or terrestrial. Resistant bacteria can circulate between humans, animals and the environment and do not respect borders. It is therefore, a global human and animal health concern.
- Misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in animals, humans or plants is a major factor driving the emergence and development of AMR. Indeed, any inappropriate use of antimicrobials (unnecessary use, use against non-susceptible bacteria or virus, under-dosage, etc.) increases the risk of resistance development.