

What about preventive antibiotic use?



- **Preventive use of antibiotics is sometimes necessary in specific circumstances to support animal health and welfare**
- **Antibiotics must not be used to compensate for poor hygiene or husbandry**
- **The veterinarian and the farmer work together to ensure best practice and prevent disease recurrence**

Antibiotics are used by veterinarians to fight bacterial infections in livestock, e.g. pneumonia, mastitis, or enteric disease. Like all medicines, antibiotics need to be used responsibly: as little as possible, as much as necessary, and for the right length of time and in the right way. Even with optimal bio-security and animal husbandry, some animals will become ill. Vets and farmers need to be able to use antibiotics to treat such animals to help their recovery and maintain animal welfare.

Early control treatment

Under certain circumstances, where some animals within the group have become ill and others within the group are very likely to become ill, it is appropriate to treat the whole group. This early control treatment is sometimes referred to as metaphylactic treatment and means the treatment of a group of animals *after* the diagnosis of infection and/or clinical disease in part of the group, with the aim of preventing the spread to animals in close contact, at considerable risk and/or which may already be (sub-clinically) infected. A useful comparison with human medicines would be where a child in a classroom is diagnosed with meningococcal meningitis necessitating urgent treatment of all other in-contact children.

Preventive treatment

Preventive (prophylactic) use may be necessary when performing surgery in a farmyard setting or when treating a dog after being hit by a car where the wound is contaminated with organic matter. In exceptional circumstances where the prescribing vet believes that animals are at high risk of bacterial disease, based on their knowledge of the farm, disease prevalence within the area and the circumstances of the animals, preventive treatment may be appropriate to ensure the health and welfare of that animal or group of animals. This type of use must be neither systematic nor routine.

Best practice

If disease was to arise as a result of animals being kept in less than ideal conditions, the veterinarian will work with the farmer and advise them on steps to take to prevent recurrences. Antibiotics must *not* be used to compensate for poor hygiene or inadequate husbandry conditions. Prophylactic treatment may be appropriate on a temporary basis, to prevent disease in animals while the vet and

Antibiotic Information Leaflets

As little as possible, as much as necessary

farmer make improvements to bio-security and animal husbandry on the farm, to reduce the likelihood of subsequent batches of animals requiring treatment in this manner. It would be a grave misuse of antibiotics to use them to 'cover up' for poor husbandry conditions, and any such use is not supported by the animal health industry and its partners.

Antibiotics should only be given when the animal has a disease, has had close contact with other animals which have developed a disease or when the animal is at significant risk of infection.

IFAH-Europe supports the Responsible Use of antibiotics. This means use in the context of biosecurity, good housing and ventilation, good hygiene, appropriate nutrition and robust animals, regular monitoring of animal health and welfare, animal health planning, use of diagnostics, vaccination, and using and maintaining the pharmacovigilance system when necessary, as well as the use of antibiotics under veterinary prescription, as required by law.

Responsible Use also means ensuring transparency on how antibiotics are used. This will require veterinarians to electronically report data on individual farm use to the relevant authorities. With animal population data to hand, authorities will be able to compare the intensity of use on individual farms and intervene as necessary.

These antibiotic information leaflets are meant to inform the debate and to try to ensure that focused policy decisions are made to tackle the threat posed by antibiotic resistance – a threat we take very seriously.

“As little as possible, as much as necessary” - More information on Responsible Use, check www.epruma.eu

IFAH-Europe is the representative body of manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe. IFAH-Europe's membership covers 90% of the European market for veterinary products. Member companies invest over €400 million in research and development every year. IFAH-Europe promotes a single market in veterinary medicines across the EU ensuring the availability of medicines to protect the health and welfare of animals.

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