



The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe views and action points for keeping antimicrobials effective, now and in the future

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The development of antimicrobial substances has enormously contributed to improving the health and welfare of people and animals throughout the world. The veterinary profession plays a significant role in protecting public health and the continuous availability of a range of effective antimicrobials therefore is a fundamental « One Health » issue.

However there is a risk that the use of antimicrobials can result in resistance, which could seriously impact the health and welfare of animals and people; as such, it is critically important that antimicrobials are only used responsibly. The on-going analysis of this risk and adequate management measures require commitment and collaboration of all parties concerned: the veterinary profession, the medical profession, animal owners, patient organisations, politicians and industry, etc. To be successful everyone should contribute his share to an overall strategy.

FVE wishes to contribute with the following actions:

- FVE develops and promotes the development of guidelines (for each species) on the responsible use of antimicrobials.
- On Antimicrobial Awareness Day, FVE in cooperation with the Polish Presidency will organize a Seminar, to raise awareness and to promote responsible use of antimicrobials
- FVE promotes stricter conditions in best practice for the use of certain categories of antimicrobials, which have special importance in human medicine (e.g. fluorquinolones and 3rd and 4th generation of cephalosporines)
- FVE supports the establishment of a system for reporting all veterinary use and prescription of antibiotics to the appointed official body in each country.
- FVE calls for a change in the cascade and will promote strict compliance with the cascade.
- FVE wishes the following points of view to be taken into the strategy on antimicrobial resistance.

1. Veterinary expertise

The veterinary profession has a great deal to offer in relation to the prevention of antimicrobial resistance, with its knowledge and understanding of Good Veterinary Practice and the responsible use of medicines. More-over - veterinary medicine being a regulated profession - all veterinarians are supervised by and accountable to the national statutory body, or an equally functioning organisation. Therefore and realizing that room for improvement will always exist, FVE believes that improvements will be best achieved by striking the correct balance between best practice and regulation and allowing veterinarians to apply their knowledge whilst keeping him/her responsible and accountable for doing so.

2. Research and Education

FVE believes that further research should be undertaken in several areas regarding the occurrence of intra- and interspecies transmission of resistant strains -a better understanding being essential for taking effective measures. Special attention should be given to the relationship between the use of antimicrobials in the medical field and that in the veterinary field and the way this affects the transmission of resistant strains. An additional area for further research is the development of on-site diagnostic tools, which would help to narrow down the choice of treatment and in selecting the right antimicrobial.

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3. Animal health management

To optimise health surveillance and management on farms, FVE recommends the establishment of a one-to-one “animal owner - veterinarian” relationship, where both collaborate in the establishment and implementation of a health management plan. This would contribute to a better monitoring of the use of antimicrobials as well as to the Food Chain Information (FCI), a requirement of EU legislation. Unrelated or uncoordinated consultations with different veterinarians easily leads to suboptimal and/or over-treatment of animals; with a negative impact on the occurrence of antimicrobial resistance.

FVE will encourage veterinarians to limit the numbers of animals under their care to a maximum of what can reasonably be overseen. Exceeding such figures should be an indication for additional controls. Use of antimicrobials should be recorded in a transparent manner and be readily accessible. It goes without saying that uncontrolled sales via the Internet must be banned.

4. Recommendations for the responsible use of antimicrobials

Crucial steps in the responsible use of medicines in general, and antimicrobials in particular, involve a proper examination of the animal(s) concerned and the conditions under which they are kept. The clinical history of the herd shall be taken into consideration, and where appropriate integrated in the food chain information. Whenever possible, diagnostic tests aiming at the isolation and identification of the causal organism and its antimicrobial sensitivity shall be performed. This will support a proper diagnosis and the prescription of an appropriate treatment by a qualified veterinarian, who is then accountable to the National CA / licensing body. Equally important is the evaluation of the effect of a treatment and to adjust it if necessary. Uncontrolled use of antimicrobials must be banned. FVE also recommends that certain categories of antimicrobials, with special importance in human medicine (e.g. fluorquinolones and 3rd and 4th generation of cephalosporines) would only be used when, due to the organisms ascertained susceptibility, no other suitable alternative is available. Animal species specific guidelines for use of antimicrobials are under development.

5. Off Label use

Given the current situation with regard to the poor availability of veterinary medicines, with different markets for different species and indications, there is a constant need to use products outside the producer's recommendations, for example when the causal organism susceptibility so requires. Instruments like the cascade (Dir 2002/82 articles 10 and 11) are not ideal, however, they become essential to allow treatment when licensed products are not available.

With regard to the application of the cascade, FVE recommends to change the order of it. At the moment products specifically authorised for the relevant species and indications by other Member States may only be used in cases where there is no suitable veterinary or even human product on the National market. FVE is of the opinion that products authorised for the relevant species and indications by other Member States should come at the same level as products authorised on the National market for other species or indications.

Record keeping should be revised and tailored to its use. Instead of trying to capture every case, there probably is greater value to be found in focusing on critical cases. For example, ranges of comparable products, containing the same active substance(s) are authorised for different species, in different dosages and with different withdrawal times. It should be recognised that there is a difference in public health implications between using such a product within its range of authorisations and using a product that is completely outside its recommendations for use.

6. Animal husbandry

Last but not least, FVE is convinced that in terms of reduction of amounts of antimicrobials used, most can be gained by working on the conditions under which animals are kept. Proper housing conditions, reduced movements and mixing of animals and biosecurity measures, but to mention a few, reduce infection and the need to treat with antimicrobials. FVE and its members, realise that this is a long-term goal, but will encourage animal keepers to make this a priority every time investments in management systems are considered.

A critical factor here is the return on investment the farmer may expect. Financial incentives are necessary for the farmer to affect change in animal husbandry and therefore reduce resistance.