



FVE position on the maintenance of antimicrobials' efficacy

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Maintaining the efficacy of antimicrobials is a fundamental « One Health » issue contributing to the Public Good. It requires the involvement and commitment of all the parties involved, from pharmaceutical companies to the end users like farmers, pet owners and citizens, from breeders to farmers, from veterinarians to medical doctors, without forgetting the food industry. FVE wishes to collaborate with all stakeholders involved for the development of an effective common approach.

The mission of the Veterinary Profession – represented by the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) - is the protection of Animal Health, Public Health and Animal Welfare. One of the most important tasks of the profession is the prevention and control of animal diseases; in particular the prevention of zoonosis and food borne disorders, which is crucial for assuring public health.

Further to more fundamental measures - like zootechnics, good animal husbandry practices and responsible animal ownership - veterinary medicinal products are fundamental in the treatment and prevention of animal diseases. However, with regard to the use of antimicrobial agents this is not without consequences. Exposure of bacteria to antimicrobials can lead to selective pressure and the selection of bacteria that are less susceptible or even resistant to treatment. The exchange of resistance-factors between bacteria, and the transmission of resistant bacteria between different (animal-) species, including mankind, further increase the risk.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe is well aware of the occurrence of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria and is concerned by the current increase and its cross-species transmissibility. FVE and its members take all the necessary measures to tackle these trends in food-producing animals, as well as in horses and in companion animals.

In order to be able to take effective measures in the veterinary field, there is need for a clear and unambiguous assessment of the use of antibiotics including those in medicated feed, by species and by region. This should be complemented by monitoring the use at farm level, and be linked with the monitoring of the development of antimicrobial resistance. Therefore, FVE specifically welcomes - amongst several other important actions being taken - the initiative on the “European Survey on Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption”.

The veterinary profession organised in FVE recommends

- that measures to be taken are science based, realistic, mandatory, proportionate and sustainable. The approaches in the veterinary field and in the human medical field should be well coordinated.
- that preventive use of antimicrobials will be minimised. They may not be used to mask poor farm management or inadequate zootechnics. Biosecurity, hygiene-standards, animal husbandry practices and vaccination programmes must be developed and improved where necessary.

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- the implementation of best practices in animal husbandry and of preventive programs under the guidance of their veterinarians should be promoted amongst farmers and animal keepers.
- the restricted use of some critically important antimicrobials (e.g. only for second intention and/or after justification) in order to preserve the therapeutic arsenal for human beings.
- the development of diagnostic – if possible ‘on site’ - tools in order to differentiate viral infections from bacterial infections in the field.
- that veterinary students and veterinarians will be fully trained for the use of antimicrobials and be aware of antimicrobial resistance. They must endorse and implement the guidelines written for different species. They must always use antimicrobials in a responsible way.
- that the European Commission and the Member State authorities take the necessary measures to support the animal health sector in a similar manner to that on the human side and to provide training and education support in the implementation of responsible use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicines across the Community

FVE considers education a crucial part of the strategy to be set up, and must apply to a broad range of people. The public in general must be aware of the risks associated with the use of antimicrobials without any professional advice or prescription, and especially when purchased via the Internet. Communication campaigns like the European Antimicrobial awareness day and the French « antibiotics are not automatic » initiative must inform the public at large. Contrary to what has been the case previously, these campaigns must embrace the animal health sector in equal measure.

The veterinary profession is and wishes to remain part of the solution of the AMR. Veterinarians through the FVE wish to contribute actively and responsibly to strive forces with all stakeholders and the Commission to fight AMR.

FVE calls upon the European Commission to convene all the concerned stakeholders to set up a multidisciplinary EU taskforce in order to develop policy to be used European wide.