Antimicrobials always need a veterinary prescription

Antimicrobial drugs are vital to treat and prevent disease in animals and humans. But the risk that the organism causing the disease will develop resistance to them increases every time they're used. To make sure antimicrobials stay effective now and in the future, they must be strictly controlled. Only veterinarians and human doctors should prescribe antimicrobials, following an examination and clinical diagnosis. Wherever possible, sensitivity testing should be done to determine which antimicrobial will be most successful in treating a particular condition.

Prevention is better than cure

A farmer can reduce animal disease and so the need to use antimicrobials altogether by drawing up an effective health plan, working with a veterinarian. This should outline how the farmer will keep animals healthy and provide effective bio-security. Veterinarians should conduct frequent herd health visits to all farms. Antimicrobials should never replace good husbandry, bio-security and management practices. Prevention is essential for all animals, including companion animals and horses.

Measures taken should always be science- and risk-based

Measures to ensure responsible use of antimicrobials should always be based on scientific evidence and a thorough assessment of the risks they pose. With their knowledge and experience, veterinarians play a pivotal role in developing better solutions to manage antimicrobials.

One Single Market is necessary

Pharmaceuticals are perhaps Europe’s most heavily regulated products. To make sure the widest possible range of veterinary medicines is available everywhere, we need a true, unrestricted single European market of medicines – increasing availability, accessibility and alternatives to antimicrobial use.

New and critically important antimicrobials must be strictly controlled

We have to prevent development of resistance to antimicrobials classified as “critically important” or to new antimicrobials for as long as possible. Veterinarians should only prescribe these as a very last resort, following a sensitivity test, and should administer them themselves.

The animal health industry should promote responsible use

The pharmaceutical industry should show its commitment to promoting responsible use of antimicrobials by developing antimicrobial products ethically, advertising and selling only to veterinarians or through veterinary prescription, and providing information about their proper use.

More research and new products are necessary

Research should be strongly encouraged to develop and make rapid diagnostic tests and sensitivity tests available – particularly ones that veterinarians can use on farms/in the field. A reliable regulatory environment is essential to promote the development of new antimicrobial products and alternatives to antimicrobials.

Campaigns to use antimicrobials responsibly are needed

The authorities, the veterinary and medical professions, farmers and the public need to be more aware of the importance of using antimicrobials responsibly. Over-the-counter and illegal sales must be prosecuted and eliminated. We need publicity campaigns in both the animal and human fields to make this happen, promoting lasting changes in attitude.

Animal health + human health = One Health; animal and people’s health are closely intertwined, and all stakeholders need to work together for the common good.