

SHEEP VETERINARY SOCIETY POLICY ON RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTIMICROBIALS IN SHEEP

There is increasing global concern over rising levels of antibiotic resistance in human and animal medicine. It is now considered that unless urgent action is taken by the medical, veterinary and pharmaceutical industries we will enter a post- antibiotic era where diseases once readily treatable with antimicrobials will be uncontrollable.

Antibiotics play a vital role in the treatment of bacterial diseases of sheep. Therefore it is necessary that they continue to be used in sheep for the benefit of animal health and welfare, whilst minimising the risk of the emergence of antimicrobial resistance.

The Sheep Veterinary Society (SVS) views antimicrobial resistance as a “One Health” problem. From an agricultural perspective the action required of us is to **firstly reduce our overall antibiotic use; and secondly avoid, or severely restrict the use of, certain critically important antibiotics for human health**. The SVS is actively working with other relevant national bodies to achieve these goals in the UK animal health sector.

As veterinary professionals we are the gatekeepers of antibiotic access for our clients and so have a pivotal role in achieving these aims. Therefore the society advises the following to its members:-

1. It is essential that veterinary surgeons comply with the current veterinary medicines regulations regarding the prescribing of antibiotics and regulated by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (1).
2. In addition veterinary surgeons should ensure they are prescribing in accordance with BVA guidance on responsible use of antibiotics (2).
3. Veterinary surgeons should engage with CPD on antimicrobial resistance and responsible antibiotic use.
4. **All** antibiotics should be prescribed responsibly, following current professional guidelines (2). However, in addition, the European Medicines Agency (3) and the VMD (4) consider special attention be paid to prescribing antibiotics according to the categorisation below:-

European Medicines Agency (EMA) Antimicrobial Expert Group (AMEG) Classification of WHO Critically Important Antimicrobial (CIAs) based on degree of risk to humans due to antimicrobial resistance development following use in animals

Category	Risk to Public Health	Antimicrobial Included	Advice on Use
A. Authorised CIA			
1	Low/limited risk to public health	Narrow spectrum Penicillins, Macrolides, Tetracycline	General principles of responsible use to be applied
2	Higher risk to	Fluoroquinolones, systemic	Restricted to use

	public health	3 rd and 4 th generation Cephalosporins, (Aminoglycosides, broad spectrum Pencillins) Colistin	where there are no alternatives or response to alternatives expected to be poor
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5. Veterinary surgeons should work to reduce the total amount of antibiotics used on farms by encouraging uptake by farmers of alternate methods of disease control wherever possible. These include biosecurity, vaccination, improved farm hygiene and other management actions. Currently, areas where veterinary surgeons may be able to make the most impact to reduce the use of antibiotics on sheep farms are:-
 - i. Blanket treatment of lambs against neonatal bacterial infections
 - ii. Whole flock antibiotic treatments for lameness
 - iii. Whole flock antibiotic treatments for enzootic abortion.

6. All sheep farms should have a health plan written in conjunction with their veterinary surgeon and reviewed at least annually. A review of preventative health strategies and antimicrobial use should be included in the health plan.

References

1. Veterinary Medicines Regulations <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/veterinary-medicines-regulations>
2. BVA: Responsible use of Antimicrobials in Veterinary Practice. https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News_campaigns_and_policies/Policies/Medicines/responsible-use-of-antimicrobials-in-veterinary-practice.pdf
3. European Medicines Agency http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Other/2014/07/WC500170253.pdf
4. Veterinary Medicines Directorate UK VARSS 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582341/1051728-v53-UK-VARSS_2015.pdf