



Antibiotics—your role as a farmer

BVA client leaflet Number 4 • November 2013

Antibiotics—what are they and why are they important

Antibiotics are drugs used to treat, and in some cases prevent, bacterial infections.

Antibiotics 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 are used.

Antibiotics always need a veterinary prescription

To make sure antibiotics stay effective now and in the future, they must be strictly controlled. Only veterinary surgeons and human doctors are legally allowed to prescribe antibiotics, following an examination and clinical diagnosis.

Wherever possible, your vet will do a sensitivity test to determine which antibiotic will be most successful in treating a particular condition.

Prevention is better than cure—your role as a farmer

As a farmer you can reduce animal disease and the need to use antibiotics to a large extent by good animal husbandry and management and by drawing up an effective health plan with your vet.

A health plan should outline how you will keep animals healthy and provide effective bio-security. Your vet should conduct frequent herd health visits to your farm.

Antibiotics 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

Your vet should put in measures to ensure responsible use of antibiotics are based on scientific evidence and a thorough assessment of the risks they pose. With their knowledge and experience, vets play a pivotal role in developing better solutions to manage antibiotics.

New and critically important antibiotics must be strictly controlled

Vets and farmers have to prevent development of resistance to antibiotics classed as “critically important” or to new antibiotics for as long as possible. Your vet should only prescribe these as a very last resort, following a sensitivity test, and should administer them themselves.

Key points

- Farmers and vets have a responsibility to use antibiotics responsibly—over-the-counter and illegal sales should be prohibited.
- Animal health and human health = One Health. Animal and people’s health are closely intertwined and it is important that farmers and vets work together for the common good.
- Speak to your vet today about drawing up a health plan and for any questions you have about antibiotics.

About the BVA

The BVA is the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets for animal owners produced by the BVA, you can find more at www.bva.co.uk/public