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Joint AVMA-FVE-CVMA statement on strengthening veterinary antimicrobial stewardship: policy and industry recommendations

Preamble:

This document provides recommendations to policymakers, regulators and the animal health industry to support veterinary practitioners in the responsible and judicious use of antimicrobials. It aims to complement and enhance existing antimicrobial stewardship guidelines for veterinarians, ensuring a more effective and sustainable approach to antimicrobial use in animals.

Considering that:

1. The responsible and judicious use of antimicrobials in a veterinary context is essential for safeguarding animal health and welfare, human health, and the environment.

2. Strategies to maintain and improve antimicrobial effectiveness, availability, and accessibility must be well coordinated in a One Health approach. Therefore, animal and human healthcare professionals and those in the environmental sector should work collaboratively to ensure responsible and judicious use of antimicrobials.

3. The ongoing availability and access to a suitable range of antimicrobials are essential for the management of infectious diseases in animals, to maintain animal health and welfare and food safety.

4. Veterinarians are highly educated and accountable health professionals through their knowledge, professionalism, and regulatory frameworks, and are good stewards of antimicrobials, managing their use to preserve their effectiveness.

5. As well as responsible and judicious antimicrobial use, veterinarians practice antimicrobial stewardship through the implementation of a wide range of preventive strategies to optimize animal health and reduce the need for antimicrobials, such as appropriate husbandry practices, management, vaccination, infection prevention and biosecurity programs, and appropriate nutrition.

6. Medically important antimicrobials, as defined by the relevant national health authority, are only to be administered to animals with the oversight of a licensed veterinarian.

7. Before using an antimicrobial, an evidence-led decision is made to decide whether any antimicrobial is indicated in the treatment plan. If an antimicrobial is indicated, the most appropriate antimicrobial is selected, with the correct dose, duration, and route of administration, based on the integration of medical history, clinical examination, diagnostic test results, laboratory data including antimicrobial susceptibility testing using approved standards when appropriate[1], evidence-based guidelines, experience, and expected clinical outcomes based on the best-published evidence. The veterinarian is balancing the expected therapeutic outcomes for the specific patient(s) with potential risks to public health, animal health, and the environment.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made for policymakers, regulators, and the animal health industry to support veterinary practitioners in the responsible and judicious use of antimicrobials. It aims to complement and enhance existing antimicrobial stewardship guidelines for veterinarians, ensuring a more effective and sustainable approach to antimicrobial use in animals.

To that end, we call upon:

1. Policymakers to ensure that regulation on the authorisation and use of veterinary medicinal products is sector-specific, science-based, practically feasible and actionable to facilitate prescribers' responsible and judicious use.

2. Policymakers to ensure that legislation dictates that medically important antimicrobials, as defined by the relevant national health authority, are only administered to animals with the oversight of a licensed veterinarian.

[1] CLSI VET01 Performance Standards for Antimicrobial Disk and Dilution Susceptibility Tests for Bacteria Isolated From Animals, 6th edition, https://clsi.org/shop/standards/vet01/

3. Policymakers to ensure that antimicrobial resistance risk analyses underpinning legislation take into account and carefully balance the risks and benefits to animal health and welfare alongside those to human health and the environment—ensuring that animal health and welfare are not overlooked in the decision-making process.

4. Policymakers to acknowledge; monitor and respond rapidly to the emergence of unintended negative consequences for animal health and welfare due to legal restrictions on the use of antimicrobials.

5. The animal health industry, academia and policymakers to work together on the development, manufacturing, and market availability of a wide range of effective antimicrobials and other medicinal products such as vaccines and similar supporting measures. They should aim towards innovative treatment options that have the least impact on resistance development.

6. Policymakers and laboratories to facilitate licensing and availability of effective, rapid, clinically-relevant, and standardized diagnostic tests in order to carry out pathogen identification and susceptibility testing.

7. Regulators to recommend that prescribers raise awareness and inform clients about the need and best practices for maintaining the effectiveness of antimicrobials. Every time a human or animal healthcare professional considers antimicrobial therapy, there is an opportunity to educate the patient or client on antimicrobial stewardship.

8. Regulators to require prescribers to communicate clear instructions to clients on the proper use of antimicrobials, including adherence to the prescription, compliance with withdrawal periods, and appropriate storage conditions.

9. Policymakers to support accessible mechanisms for safe and timely disposal of unused medicines.

10. Health professionals, academia, and representative bodies to further develop practical evidence-based guidelines to support veterinarians in antimicrobial stewardship.

11. Government to ensure sufficient coordinated and targeted funding for all sectors is available for further research and development of robust surveillance systems, national One Health AMR Action plans (NAPs), preventive healthcare, development of vaccines and other alternatives to the use of antimicrobials (including bacteriophages, polyclonal antibodies or host-directed therapies), stewardship programs/training, and rapid and affordable diagnostic tests.

The AVMA, CVMA and FVE will continue to collaborate in taking a leadership role in promoting responsible and judicious use of antimicrobials in animals and in promoting global antimicrobial stewardship.

Background information of partners concerned:

- The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) are three of the leading veterinary professional organisations in the World. Together they represent over 400 000 veterinarians in all disciplines of the veterinary profession.

- The mission of the AVMA is to lead the veterinary medical profession by advocating for its members and advancing the science and practice of veterinary medicine to improve animal and human health.

- The CVMA is the national voice for the veterinary profession dedicated to serving and representing the veterinarians of Canada. The Association is committed to excellence within the profession and to the well-being of animals. It promotes public awareness of the contribution of animals and veterinarians to society.

- The European Veterinary profession, embodied by FVE, strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe. Together with its members, FVE aims to support veterinarians in delivering their professional responsibilities at the best possible level, recognized and valued by society.