

Media Release



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NPA PRESS RELEASE

Pig industry to address society's concerns about antibiotics

National Pig Association is launching an antibiotic stewardship programme to achieve minimum use of antibiotics, consistent with responsible human and food-animal medicine.

There will be six strands:

1. Capture and collate antibiotic use data recorded on pig farms.
2. Benchmark each farm's antibiotic use against other farms of a similar type.
3. Extend education in effective disease control strategies.
4. Reduce antibiotic use, consistent with responsible human and food-animal medicine.
5. Promote veterinary prescribing principles to strictly limit the use of antibiotics of critical importance to human health.
6. Appoint Stewardship Commissars who will continually review industry's use of antimicrobials and champion initiatives.

"We recognise and share society's concerns about the level of antibiotic use in human and livestock medicine," said NPA chief executive Dr Zoe Davies. "In particular we acknowledge the risk, albeit small, of antibiotic resistance developing in bacteria in pigs and this resistance spreading to humans."

In a bid to ensure and demonstrate responsible use of antibiotics in pigs, NPA is introducing the Pig Industry Antibiotic Stewardship Programme and working with Pig Veterinary Society, industry levy body AHDB Pork, and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, to progress its initiatives.

"Although antibiotic resistance in humans is largely caused by over-use and misuse of antibiotics in human medicine, the British pig industry has a duty to ensure it does not contribute to the problem," said NPA senior policy adviser Dr Georgina Crayford.

"Overall sales of antibiotics for use in livestock in the United Kingdom sit mid-range compared to other European Union countries. We acknowledge the current perception that antibiotic use in our pig industry may be higher than in some other countries, but we don't have any data to demonstrate what our actual on-farm usage is, hence the need for action."

The first, and most important goal of the Stewardship Programme will be to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on current use of antibiotics in British pig husbandry.

This will be achieved through the industry's newly-introduced online medicines book, created by AHDB Pork working with Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

When the electronic medicines book has been sufficiently populated, producers will be able to benchmark their use of antibiotics with anonymised data from other farms of the same type, and to work with their vets to drive down overall use.

The pig sector has already taken additional key actions to guard against resistance in critically important human medicines.

1. Following a recent finding of resistance to colistin in bacteria from pigs in the United Kingdom, the Pig Veterinary Society has re-categorised this product as Class 3 in its prescribing principles for antimicrobials. This means colistin may only be prescribed as a last-resort when no other options are available and supported by antibiotic sensitivity testing.

2. Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid was also moved to Class 3 recently, and joins third and fourth generation cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones.

3. There are no veterinary medicines for livestock containing 3rd or 4th generation cephalosporins (recognised as critically important for human medicine) available in an in-feed or in-water formulation, so these antibiotics are only ever administered to individual animals.

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