

Media Release



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NPA PRESS RELEASE

NPA welcomes reduction in pig industry Colistin usage

The NPA has welcomed new figures suggesting a significant drop in usage by the pig sector of Colistin, an antibiotic of last resort used to treat a number of bacterial infections in both humans and animals

The latest available UK sales data from 2015 shows Colistin sales into veterinary medicines were already low at around one tenth of the EU recommended limit.

But preliminary analysis by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance of data received via the new pig e-Medicines Book (e-MB) suggests that use of Colistin in pigs decreased by more than 70% last year.

NPA chief executive Zoe Davies said the figures were yet another indication of how the pig sector was rising to the challenge of reducing and refining antibiotic usage.

She said: "This data shows exactly how seriously farmers and their vets have taken this issue, and proves this is an industry that does what it says it will!"

Pig Veterinary Society (PVS) president Mark White said: "Veterinary surgeons working with their clients voluntarily restricted Colistin's use last year and this is a perfect example of how vets can and do prescribe responsibly. The key point is the need to conserve use for when it really is necessary."

RUMA chair Gwyn Jones said the findings meant that once 2016 sales data are released, the UK could be one of the five lowest users of Colistin in Europe.

He said: "We were looking for significant reductions in 2016 following the best practice guidelines issued by the Pig Veterinary Society at the end of 2015, but this has exceeded our hopes."

Mandy Nevel, AHDB Pork's veterinary team manager, said: "It's very positive to see the pig sector – vets and farmers together – responding to the responsibility of having continued access to this drug as a last resort and reducing use where possible."

Proportionate antibiotic targets

The NPA has this week submitted a joint proposal with the PVS to the RUMA Targets Task Force for a proportionate long-term target to reduce overall antibiotic usage within the pig sector.

Dr Davies stressed that, one year on from the publication of the NPA's Antibiotic Stewardship Programme, the pig industry has made great strides in reducing and refining antibiotic usage.

Official Government figures showed sales of antibiotic products licensed for pigs-only were down 24% in 2015, with sales for pigs and poultry down 10 per cent. Further significant falls are expected to be recorded for 2016 and 2017.

Figures supplied by the feed industry showed the proportion of feed for young pigs containing a prescribed antibiotic fell from 37% at the beginning of 2014 to 18% by the end of 2016, with two-thirds of the reduction taking place last year.

Dr Davies added: "Concerted efforts are being made to improve education and offer practical advice on responsible use of antibiotics across the industry. And a great deal of work is being done to find alternatives to antibiotics, such as through autogenous vaccination, bacteriophage technology and advanced genetic techniques."

The eMB-Pigs database, developed and launched by AHDB Pork last year, has now collected the 2015 and 2016 antibiotic records of more than two-thirds of the national herd.

More data will be made public later this year when the sector-specific targets are announced at RUMA's conference in association with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate on October 27.

Notes to editors

1) The NPA's Antibiotic Stewardship programme, launched in May 2016, has six strands of activity:

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

2) The most recent UK-VARSS (Veterinary Antibiotic Resistance and Sales Surveillance) showed sales of antibiotics licensed for both pigs and poultry were down 23 tonnes to 212 tonnes in 2015, a 10% drop. Sales of products licensed for pigs only were down 24%, a 16 tonne reduction to 50 tonnes, the biggest fall across all the sectors.