

Media Release



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NPA PRESS RELEASE

Pig industry stepping up to the antibiotic challenge

The UK pig industry is stepping up to the antibiotic challenge on a number of fronts, the National Pig Association (NPA) has revealed, as the spotlight falls once again on the issue.

Excellent progress is being made in implementing the NPA's Antibiotic Stewardship Programme, which, published in May, sets out a framework for reducing and refining antibiotic usage in the pig sector.

It includes key strands on recording antibiotic usage, education across the supply chain and responsible use of medication on farms.

Today marks the start of World Antibiotic Awareness Week, which aims to increase awareness of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and encourage best practice globally to help tackle the problem.

While this has inevitably sparked renewed calls for restrictions in how antibiotics are used, the NPA is highlighting some of the positive steps the UK pig sector is already taking to implement its stewardship programme. These include:

- Data for 535 pig units covering nearly 6 million pigs has been entered into the industry database for antibiotic use
- Entering data onto AHDB Pork's eMB-Pigs is likely to be made compulsory next year under the Red Tractor Pork assurance scheme, covering over 90 per cent of pig production
- Practices are changing on farms. For example, one of the UK's biggest pig producing companies is in the process of stopping the administration of antibiotics through feed
- Awareness of the issue is rising rapidly across the pig industry. The topic has been discussed at numerous events over the past year, including, recently, at a ForFarmers conference in London, the NPA's regional producer meetings and various events organised by veterinary companies for producers
- The Pig Veterinary Society's autumn meeting in Edinburgh included a dedicated session on antimicrobial use and resistance, at which the Chief Veterinary Officer spoke.
- PVS will also be sharing best practice in antibiotic use at the London Vet Show this week.
- NPA is looking at strengthening the training requirements for pig farm staff responsible for administering antibiotics. For example, they may be expected to undertake a Certificate of Competence in responsible use of antibiotics in the future.

The stewardship programme has already received widespread praise, including from Defra Minister Lord Gardiner, Defra's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Simon Hall and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Mr Hall praised the NPA's 'responsible, proactive attitude' approach to the antibiotic challenge.

NPA chief executive Zoe Davies said: “We are all aware of the challenges that lie ahead but I am pleased to say we are making very good progress in implementing the NPA’s Antibiotic Stewardship Programme.

“We are proving, as we said after the O’Neill report was published in September, that we are up for the challenge. This is just the start, however. As an industry we are fully aware there is much more work to be done.”

NPA senior policy advisor Dr Georgina Crayford said the immediate priority for the pig sector was to upload antibiotic usage data onto eMB-Pigs. The numbers on the database are set to rise further as more of the UK’s large pig producing companies upload their data.

Dr Crayford said: “It is absolutely vital that we are able to present accurate figures on current usage by early 2017 to ensure we can agree fair and proportionate usage reduction targets.”

She also stressed the need for a balanced debate on antibiotic usage on farms and AMR.

Dr Crayford added: “Of course everyone understands the need to reduce and refine antibiotic usage and the livestock sector has been working hard to achieve this. But we also need to be clear about what constitutes responsible usage on farms.

“And, in line with the One Health agenda, we must ensure the health and welfare of livestock are not compromised by the setting of unrealistic targets.”

Notes to editors

- 1) The World Health Organisation’s World [Antibiotic Awareness Week](#) runs from November 14-20. It aims to increase awareness of global antibiotic resistance and encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy.
- 2) The NPA published its Antibiotic Stewardship Programme in May. It sets out the following priorities for replacing, reducing and refining antibiotic use in the pig sector. These are:
 - 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
- 3) All UK livestock sectors will face new targets for reducing and refining antibiotic usage from 2018, following the recommendations of the O’Neill report, published in September. For more information, click [here](#)
- 4) NPA senior policy advisor Dr Georgina Crayford has provided more background on how antibiotics are used on pig farms, which can be read [here](#)

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