



# AMR: Antimicrobial use is a multifaceted responsibility

The VCNZ's **Wayne Ricketts** sees a number of players, including veterinarians, responding to the threat of AMR, but says there's plenty more work to be done.

**I RECENTLY ATTENDED** one of DCV's AMR stewardship workshops facilitated by Scott MacDougall. Well done, Scott and DCV, for hosting these workshops. It was a superb workshop, well supported by the enthusiastic veterinarians present. I think it's fair to say there was a range of understanding and knowledge of the issues, but on the other hand there was a high level of commitment by the veterinarians to work together to address AMR. Renée Loader, DCV President, tells me they have had overwhelming feedback from attendees about how valuable and interesting the workshops were. Some said they were the best CPD events they had been to from DCV/NZVA.

Scott opened with a quote from Professor Dame Sally Davies, UK Chief Medical Officer: "Antimicrobial resistance poses a catastrophic threat". Scott reminded us that we are the third-lowest users of antibiotics in animals in the world (in contrast, we are among the top users of antibiotics in human medicine).

The use of antibiotics in humans remains the primary route for the development of antibiotic resistance in humans. However, evidence confirms the increasing transfer of resistant strains of bacteria from animals to humans and vice versa, as well as from humans and animals to the environment.

We can't rest on our laurels, but we have a great baseline to launch from. It was pleasing to see in Scott's presentation notes the VCNZ poster on responsible antibiotic use, which I am sure is now on clinic walls across New Zealand! It was also pleasing to see from Scott's survey of

farmers' criteria for antimicrobial choice – veterinarians are the clear winners – that the most common primary reason for choosing an antimicrobial is veterinary advice (87%). Scott noted that there is a general acceptance by farmers of the reality of AMR. The unknown is what they can do about it. Farmers understand how AMR might happen on their own farms, but struggle to understand how it might affect other animals and humans.

## CALL TO ACTION

There are a number of initiatives in place to tackle AMR. At a global level, there are the OIE's responsible use guidelines, and the OIE's and WHO's classification of critically important antibiotics. At a national level, the AMR Coordination Group (Nigel French and Mark Bryan represent the veterinary profession) will be developing a national strategy. There is also the NZVA's 2030 goal, the production of prudent use guidelines (these are excellent), and an initiative looking at the reality of selective DCT.

At an individual veterinary level, our prescribing behaviours and activities impact on the global issue of AMR. There is a wider cost to society of the use of antimicrobials. This cost is not faced by the animals or humans for whom they are prescribed, or by the medical or veterinary practitioners who prescribe them. While it is difficult for individual veterinarians to act globally, we have a significant impact at a local level. There is now a call to action for veterinarians.

VCNZ is also responding to that call. We are reviewing the veterinary

medicines section of the Code this year. This review is being led by VCNZ's Professional Standards Committee. Committee members represent the NZVA, MPI, industry, veterinarians, farmers and the ACVM. While we are reviewing the medicines section, there will be a strong focus on antibiotics. This will include a new section on antibiotics, their prudent use and stewardship, annual (RVM) consultations, advertising (hopefully you participated in the NZVA/VCNZ survey in March), veterinary operating instructions, the use of critically important antibiotics, DCT and multi-modal use. We are aiming to make this section easier to follow and put into practice.

VCNZ also supports a reclassification of antimicrobials and the addition of prudent-use statement labels. I know that some practices are already labelling the critically important antibiotics.

We strongly encourage you to make comments during the consultation period. We really value comments from practitioners on the issues you face, which I know are not always easy. What happens at the coalface is very important to us. Please speak up.

The changes we are about to see in antimicrobial use remind me of the end of routine inductions of dairy cows, and how we veterinarians collaboratively achieved success from the starting gates of disparate and divergent views.

I think the AMR 'planets' are much more aligned than in the induction debate, and I am confident that we'll shave some time off to reach success – and with much less blood, sweat and tears. <sup>Ⓞ</sup>