



Antimicrobial Stewardship Strategy

August 2025

Introduction

The Veterinary Council of New Zealand (Vet Council) is the regulator for veterinarians. Our purpose is to lead veterinary excellence, ensure quality and advance trust.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the top global public health and development threats.¹ As the body responsible for veterinary standards, the Vet Council must play a role in supporting veterinarians and the primary sector to manage this threat. This document sets out our strategy for doing so.

Vision

Our vision is that antimicrobials remain effective and their stewardship ensures that animal health and welfare, market access, public health, and trust in the veterinary profession are protected.

Alignment

It is important that our strategy aligns with global and national efforts to manage AMR. Below is a description of some of the key commitments and plans that we have considered and are seeking to align with. Note that this description is not a comprehensive summary of these documents and is included to provide an understanding of the context in which we are operating. Those with an interest should read them in full.

Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance

In May 2015, the World Health Assembly adopted a [global action plan on antimicrobial resistance](#), which outlines five objectives:

1. to improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education and training;
2. to strengthen the knowledge and evidence base through surveillance and research;
3. to reduce the incidence of infection through effective sanitation, hygiene and infection prevention measures;
4. to optimise the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health;
5. to develop the economic case for sustainable investment that takes account of the needs of all countries and to increase investment in new medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines and other interventions.

The Global Action Plan “underscores the need for an effective “one health” approach involving coordination among numerous international sectors and actors, including human and veterinary medicine, agriculture, finance, environment, and well-informed consumers”.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antimicrobial-resistance>



In considering farming and food sector it notes “the loss of effective antimicrobial agents to treat sick animals damages food production and family livelihoods. An additional risk for livestock workers is exposure to animals carrying resistant bacteria.”

The five objectives are, among other things, intended to be used as a framework for countries to develop their national action plans.

New Zealand’s International commitments

First United Nations High Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance

In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) met and made a political declaration that was adopted by Member States on 22 September 2016. It marked a significant milestone in addressing AMR. This declaration led to the adoption of a number of commitments at national, regional, and global levels including commitment to the development of the multi-sectoral national action plans, programmes and policy initiatives in line with the One Health approach and the Global Action Plan on AMR.

Second United Nations High Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance

In September 2024, the UNGA met “to review progress on global, regional and national efforts to tackle antimicrobial resistance, to identify gaps and invest in sustainable solutions to strengthen and accelerate multisectoral progress at all levels, through a One Health approach, with a view to scaling up the global effort to build a healthier world based on equity and leaving no one behind.” The UNGA made a [political declaration](#), which included a number of commitments, including to:

- “Ensure, by 2030, that all countries have developed or updated and are implementing multisectoral national action plans on antimicrobial resistance...”
- “Promote participatory, inclusive and transparent approaches to health governance for antimicrobial resistance at local, national, regional, and global levels, including by exploring modalities for enhancing a meaningful whole-of-society approach and social participation, by involving all relevant stakeholders... in the design, implementation and review of national action plans on antimicrobial resistance...”
- “Enhance and sustain targeted efforts, including through a One Health approach, to promote awareness of antimicrobial resistance and the appropriate use and disposal of antimicrobials...”
- “Strive to meaningfully reduce, by 2030, the quantity of antimicrobials used globally in the agri-food system from the current level...”
- “Commit to ensure that the use of antimicrobials in animals and agriculture is done in a prudent and responsible manner in...”

New Zealand’s National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance

Following the release of the Global Action Plan, New Zealand’s [National Action plan](#) was released in 2017 (work is underway on a revised National Action Plan). It sets out priorities under five objectives (matching the Global Action Plan):

Objective 1: Awareness and understanding

- Strengthen consumer awareness to improve understanding of antimicrobial resistance and the importance of using antibiotics appropriately.



- Strengthen communication and education initiatives on antimicrobial resistance and stewardship for all prescribers, and those working in the human health, animal health and agricultural sectors.

Objective 2: Surveillance and research

- Establish a coordinated national surveillance programme of antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial use in humans, animals and agriculture.
- Develop lists of priority organisms, key resistance genes and antimicrobials for national reporting.
- Implement a national minimum standard for laboratory testing and reporting of antimicrobial susceptibility.
- Support national priorities for research on antimicrobial resistance, antimicrobial consumption and stewardship in human health, animal health and agriculture.

Objective 3: Infection prevention and control

- Develop and update national guidelines and standards for IPC to achieve a nationally consistent approach, and enhance accreditation and quality assurance programmes so that more practitioners follow best-practice IPC measures across human health, animal health and agriculture.
- Promote a cohesive and sustainable 'one team' approach to IPC functions in all human health care facilities.
- Encourage continued immunisation to prevent infections.
- Promote prevention and control of zoonotic infections.
- Encourage alternative approaches to reduce infection and the need for antimicrobial use in animals.

Objective 4: Antimicrobial stewardship

- Develop a national programme or standard for antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) in all sectors of human health, including resources and/or targets for use in all sectors.
- Develop a national programme or standard for AMS in animal health.
- Establish a programme of regularly monitoring the controls on antimicrobial veterinary medicines.
- Review the controls (conditions of registration), labelling and advertising of antimicrobial-based trade name products to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Objective 5: Governance, collaboration and investment

- Establish a sustainable national governance structure to coordinate all efforts to minimise antimicrobial resistance.
- Ensure that there is sustainable investment in initiatives to minimise the impacts of antimicrobial resistance. This includes ongoing investment in surveillance, communication, stewardship and infection prevention and control.



- Establish the necessary national and international links and collaborations to implement the AMR Action Plan effectively.

New Zealand Animal and Plant Sectors' AMR Implementation Plan

In September 2024 NZFS published an [AMR implementation plan for the animal and plant sectors](#) to provide more detailed goals and deliverables than those set in the overarching New Zealand Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan.

The Sector Plan sets out a series of detailed actions covering 2024-2028 and includes action and involvement from the Vet Council.

Other relevant Government policy

Primary sector exports continue to make up the majority of New Zealand's exports and serve as a significant contributor to the economy. The Government has set a goal of doubling national exports over the next decade with a particular emphasis on free trade agreements and minimising trade barriers.

AMS is increasingly a requirement in all our major export markets and, in order to continue to access these markets, New Zealand producers will need to be able to demonstrate effective and meaningful progress on our domestic and international commitments as well as excellent AMS at the individual animal and farm level.

How we will operate

Our strategy is underpinned by four principles that dictate how we will work. These are set out below.

Collaborate

For our work to be successful, the Vet Council must work closely with others in the sector. This includes organisations tied to the veterinary profession, such as the New Zealand Veterinary Association *te Pae Kīrehe*, the School of Veterinary Science *Tawharau Ora* at Massey University, and veterinary businesses, as well as those involved in the wider sector such as the Ministry for Primary Industries *Manatū Ahu Matua*, industry good bodies and producer organisations.

We will also look to the work being done by those in the human health and environmental sectors and share our work with them.

We recognise that we have shared goals around AMR and AMS. If we don't work together, we risk undermining our work through mixed messaging, doubling-up and inefficiency.

Focus on stewardship

To achieve our vision, the veterinary profession needs to have meaningful, positive actions that can be taken. With this in mind, we will focus on excellent stewardship as a positive and practical concept that the profession can work towards.

This importantly reflects a focus on stewardship rather than just reduction in antimicrobial use. While meaningful reduction in antimicrobial use is important, and is part of our international commitments, overemphasising it risks goal displacement.



Recognise success

It is vital that we recognise the large amount of progress that has already been made by the veterinary profession. Antimicrobial use in animals has already been reduced substantially and veterinarians should continue to exercise excellent stewardship and client education every day. Our work must focus on building on that success and continuing the positive trajectory that the profession is already on.

Enable change

Part of the Vet Council's role is setting minimum standards for the profession and that includes standards around antimicrobial stewardship. However, our standards do not operate in isolation and we recognise that we must ensure that there are clear and accessible pathways available for change, before we enforce it through standards.

This means that we must communicate a clear direction of travel for the profession around antimicrobial stewardship, set expectations well in advance of regulatory change, and ensure that the profession is involved in making those changes.

What we will do

Our work will be focused on five work streams, set out below. Detailed actions in each work stream will be outlined in a separate action plan, which will be updated regularly.

Behaviour change

Efforts in this work stream will centre on supporting positive change in the profession around antimicrobial stewardship, infection prevention and control, and veterinarians' role in client-facing advocacy and education. It will include work to understand current attitudes and behaviours around stewardship and prescribing, understanding sources of discord and conflict within the profession and the wider sector, and using evidence-based methods to support and encourage behaviour change.

Standards and enforcement

This work stream will focus on working with the profession and other stakeholders to develop and improve our professional standards around antimicrobial stewardship. It will also include work to ensure we can, and do, enforce those standards when expectations are not met, to ensure fairness and consistency across the profession.

Coordination

Work in this stream will be about ensuring a consistent message and approach. We will look to the human health and environmental sectors and overseas efforts to mirror and build on their successes. We will also work to ensure consistency within the profession and the wider primary sector.

This work stream also includes work to support consistent messaging to the users of veterinary services, including messaging coming from Government and key veterinary bodies as well as individual businesses and veterinarians.

Monitoring and reporting

It is essential that we monitor and report on progress, which is what this work stream is all about. Work will revolve around monitoring and reporting on behaviours and attitudes within the profession, including prescribing behaviour, other aspects of stewardship, advocacy and education.



What is outside scope

What we don't do is as important as what we do and we recognise that a lot of important work sits best with others. Below we acknowledge some other key bodies and set out how our roles interact.

As the independent regulator, our role is not to be a representative for the profession. The NZVA is the membership association representing its members and they are best placed to do work related to advocacy and best practice.

The Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Group, within MPI, is the regulator of veterinary medicines. They are the lead body on monitoring antimicrobial use and AMR surveillance. Our complementary powers and roles mean that the Vet Council can work with ACVM in this area.