Antimicrobial Resistance in Agriculture
AB Agri Positioning Statement

AB Agri believe that prioritising health status and nutrition of livestock globally offers the opportunity to underpin productivity and resilience of agricultural sectors in most marketplaces. In addition, it can contribute to reducing the requirement for antibiotic use so creating a win-win scenario.

We support the World Health Organization's view that 'antimicrobial resistance threatens the very core of modern medicine and the sustainability of an effective, global public health response to the enduring threat from infectious diseases', because we could risk losing antibiotics to treat bacterial diseases.

We endorse the scientifically supported view that the overuse of antibiotics is a primary driver for antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and we are in favour of the creation of policies which seek to *reduce* antibiotic use in both animal and human health.

The role of the agricultural industry

The link between the development of AMR in treating human illnesses, and antibiotic resistance in farm animals, is a complex issue and is subject to ongoing research investigations. In the EU the use of low dose antibiotics for growth promotion ceased in January 2006 but we recognise that globally this, and over use of antimicrobials for therapeutics and prophylactic applications, is still common and that international travel of people and food products is an important consideration.

We are aware of differing views on responsibility, between human medicine and agriculture, but see such as making no contribution to the solution and as such, we endorse the 'One Health' approach to tackling AMR as proposed by the European Commission in 2017 (https://ec.europa.eu/health/amr/action_eu_en).

It is only by working across national and international sector boundaries that we can share ideas, build consensus and make progress.

Our position on antibiotic use on farm

As with humans, effective treatment with antibiotics is sometimes necessary to cure and / or protect animal health and welfare and, ultimately, food safety and quality.

Antibiotics should be used only as prescribed by the farm's veterinary surgeon, never routinely used, and targeted at the appropriate dose and in the right circumstances to treat and cure sick animals. Whilst we recognise that in some parts of the world antibiotics are used without veterinary supervision, we actively work in these markets to try and change this

situation by acting in whatever way we can. That may be working with trade associations or holding discussions with government departments.

We also appreciate that there are circumstances where antibiotics might be used to prevent sickness or disease developing in a group of potentially healthy animals, referred to as prophylactic treatment, where a vet diagnoses there could be a high risk of bacterial infection. This use of antibiotics should never be used to compensate for poor husbandry.

We support critically important antibiotics for human treatment only being used as an absolute last option for animals, and always under veterinary direction.

We are not proponents of companies promoting 'antibiotic-free' production which we believe is routinely impossible without welfare or mortality implications.

Reducing antibiotic use on farm

We do not consider mandatory targets for antibiotic use on specific farms to be an effective way to tackle AMR, but we do support reduction targets as specified in national schemes such as The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) in the UK. In this market we see that low levels of investment in both animal housing and close-to-market research has limited progress on addressing animal health challenges and the shared ambition to reduce the use of antibiotics.

Our insights tell us that driving a reduction in antibiotic use on farm requires:

- investment in infrastructure and biosecurity measures
- the continual monitoring of health performance (based on established consistent, standards and metrics)
- investment in on-farm technology (to deliver the insights farmers need to make timely interventions)
- targeted R&D focused on the real-life production challenges faced by farmers.

Antibiotics and extensive farming systems

We are not aware of any scientific evidence that intensive farming systems contribute more to the overall risk of antibiotic resistance than extensive farming systems.

In our experience, examples of well-managed, high health status farms can be found in all scales of farm and all farming systems.

A healthy animal is a productive animal, no matter where in the world it is.

AB Agri believe that an approach whereby producers, vets, technical and nutritional teams across the industry align to promote nutritional and management solutions to ensure healthy animals, is fundamental to reducing antibiotic use and any contribution that livestock production makes to AMR.

Definitions

Antibacterial compounds have a direct action on bacteria, reducing or inhibiting their growth or killing them completely.

Antibiotic is the same as anti-bacterial.

Antibiotic resistance is the ability of a micro-organism to grow or survive in the presence of an antibiotic that is usually sufficient to inhibit or kill micro-organisms of the same species.

Antimicrobial is the general term for any compound with a direct action on micro-organisms which is used for treatment or prevention of infections. Antimicrobials include a wide range of compounds - anti-bacterials, anti-virals, anti-fungals and antiprotozoals.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is resistance to any compound with a direct action on micro-organisms used for treatment or prevention of infections.