



10 RECOMMENDATIONS for the RESPONSIBLE & JUDICIOUS USE OF ANTIBIOTICS

COMPANION ANIMALS

Our pets sometimes need antibiotics to control infections, just like we do. Many infections cannot be managed without antibiotics. However, when antibiotics are used inappropriately, bacteria can rapidly develop resistance to those antibiotics. This may result in common infections in both humans and animals becoming extremely difficult to treat, and sometimes life-threatening.

It is critical that pet owners use these medicines carefully and responsibly, to minimise the development of bacterial resistance and make sure that these medicines remain effective in the future.

Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) support the responsible and judicious use of all veterinary medicines. These tips will help **you** to use antibiotics responsibly and safely.



Antibiotics are prescribed by your veterinarian only when needed.

- For example, when there is clinical evidence of a bacterial infection, or following some surgical procedures when infection is more likely.
- For generally healthy animals, it is often inappropriate to use antibiotics 'just in case'. However, very young or elderly pets, and those with serious health issues, should be treated on a case-by-case basis.



Some infections are not caused by bacteria, and antibiotics will not help.

- Infections can be caused by viruses, fungi, and other microorganisms – antibiotics will have no effect on these infections.
- Some infections are 'self-limiting' - they may resolve by themselves quite quickly and antibiotics will not speed up the process.
- Sometimes, the best treatment is to relieve your pet's symptoms so they feel better (for example, soothing itchy skin), while the infection resolves.



Your vet will not prescribe antibiotics without physically examining your pet.

- There are many causes of infection and illness, and the inappropriate use of antibiotics will only prolong (or worsen) your pet's suffering.



Follow the directions of your vet and the instructions on the product label, regarding the appropriate amount and timing of each dose for your pet.

- For antibiotics to be effective, the right type of antibiotic must be used, in the right amount and in the right way, for the right length of time. Your vet will consider these factors when selecting which antibiotic to use to treat the infection.
- Timing can be very important - some antibiotics must be given with food, while others work best on an empty stomach. Some antibiotics need to be given at specific intervals, while others are given only once or twice daily. Make sure that you know when to give the antibiotic to your pet.
- Make sure that you complete the entire course of treatment. Infections can persist under the surface, even when there are outward signs of improvement. Your vet will prescribe antibiotics for a specific period of time to make sure that the infection is completely resolved. Follow your vet's instructions if they recommend a follow-up visit.
- If you have difficulty administering the medication at home, contact your vet for assistance.



Contact your vet if there is no improvement within the expected period.

- Do not stop giving the antibiotic, or change the dose, without consulting your vet.



Your vet may suggest diagnostic tests to confirm the cause of the infection and to identify which antibiotic will be most effective.

- These tests are especially important if your pet has already been treated with an antibiotic and the infection has not resolved.
- Diagnostic tests will help your pet to recover faster, with fewer complications, and avoid unnecessary treatment with ineffective medicines.



Do not give antibiotics prescribed for one pet to another pet (even if they are the same species and their illnesses look similar), and never give human antibiotics to an animal.

- The medication could be inappropriate for the current condition.
- It could be expired and no longer effective (or even dangerous) for your pet.
- Just like in humans, individual animals can have unpredictable allergic reactions that may be life-threatening.
- Some human medicines are toxic to animals, even in tiny doses.



Always store antibiotics out of reach of children and animals, and at the correct temperature.

- Refer to the product label for special instructions on how to store the medicine (for example, some medicines need to be refrigerated or kept away from sunlight).
- Never leave them on a countertop, open shelf or table. Paper and foil packaging can be easily ripped (or eaten), and some medicines have a tempting smell or taste. Make sure that all medicines are safely out of reach of nosy children, curious cats and hungry hounds!



Wash your hands after giving medication to your pet to reduce the spread of infection between you and your pet.

- This is especially important after direct contact with the infection site (for example, after applying antibiotic ointment to an open wound).



Keep your pets healthy by adopting preventive health measures, including a healthy diet, regular exercise, clean living environment, vaccinations, flea/tick/worm control and regular health checks.

- These measures will keep your pet healthier and happier, for longer, and they will be less likely to develop bacterial infections that require antibiotic treatment.



REMEMBER:

If you have ANY questions, talk to your vet. Your vet is a highly trained expert and the best source of advice regarding the health of your pet.

PLEASE PIN UP THESE IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS...

