

Inaugural Antimicrobial Stewardship Conference puts surveillance on radar

Representatives from livestock associations and the animal health sector gathered together for the first Australian Veterinary Antimicrobial Stewardship Conference (AVAMS18) on 11-13 November coinciding with World Antibiotic Awareness Week.

Animal Medicines Australia Executive Director Ben Stapley said the conference had heard from international guest speakers and local experts including Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer and Chief Medical Officer.

"Australia has low rates of antibiotic use in animals¹ compared to some other nations but we do need to develop new systems if we are to continue to have access to lifesaving antibiotics," said Mr Stapley.

"There have been targeted surveillance projects undertaken in individual livestock industries and a pilot program through small animal veterinary practices in Canberra. However, it is now time to implement a holistic and independent surveillance program. Government and industry must adopt a OneHealth approach to antimicrobial resistance, which recognises that human, animal and environmental health are intrinsically connected," Mr Stapley said.

"Relationships between companion animals and their owners are closer than ever, meaning health issues need to be considered in the context of humans and animals living in close proximity.

"We need a comprehensive data set, so we can ensure that best practice prescribing is occurring for livestock industries and companion animals, the right 'frontline' antibiotics are being preserved and the best health outcomes are assured for humans, animals and the environment."

A comprehensive surveillance program would, if properly implemented:

- identify potential actions and activities that drive resistance;
- measure the effectiveness of Government policies as well as industry stewardship;
- allow for more timely and effective responses to emerging AMR issues; and
- provide an objective dataset that can be used to demonstrate low levels of resistance in Australian agriculture and the continuing prudent, responsible use of antibiotics in Australia.

Mr Stapley said that a comprehensive surveillance program would come at a low cost to the Government and would provide the basis for better policy.

"Last year the Australian Veterinary Association put forward a very modest, but effective proposal to establish a monitoring service.

"It is time for the Government to allocate the money and work with industry to establish a surveillance system."

Mr Stapley congratulated the AVAMS18 Committee on organising a successful and productive conference.

"The animal health industry is committed to promoting best practice when it comes to antibiotic use and that is why we are proud to sponsor this event," Mr Stapley said.

Media contact: Brie Colley 0474 740 808

¹ O'Neil, J 2015 '[Antimicrobials in agriculture and the environment: Reducing unnecessary use and waste](#),' The Review on Antimicrobial Resistance.

[Animal Medicines Australia](#) is the peak body that represents the leaders of the animal health industry in Australia. Our member companies are responsible for a range of veterinary medicine products that prevent, control and cure disease across the companion animal and livestock sectors.