

Veterinary Ireland Media Release 25th November 2016



Antimicrobial Resistance, The Global Threat.

Our Children Cannot Be Guaranteed Effective Antibiotics

- Legislation & Enforcement Must Reinforce Education & Awareness -

“It is estimated that 25,000 people died in Europe from resistant infections in 2015. That is one person dying every 20 minutes,” said Dr Nuala O Connor GP, Lead advisor on antibiotic resistance for the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), speaking at the **Veterinary Ireland AGM & Conference 2016** in the Heritage, Killenard, Co. Laois (Friday 25th November, 2016).

Conor Geraghty MVB Cert DHH, Practicing Vet and Veterinary Ireland Food Animal Chair, said that the uncomfortable truth is that the use of antibiotics will inevitably, over time, lead to resistance developing in the bacteria they are intended to target. The speed and incidence of the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is influenced by the usage of these antibiotics. Reducing the usage of antimicrobials is a key goal of practicing vets, demonstrated by the increasing use of vaccines since 2004.

“On-farm veterinary involvement increases herd health, reducing the need for antibiotic usage and increasing productivity. The net result is a more sustainable model of farming – less antibiotics, lower carbon emissions and better animal welfare outcomes. Sustainable farm practices lead to more productive and profitable farms,” said Mr Geraghty.

“AMR is a serious concern to all,” said Mr Geraghty. “Education and awareness are an essential part of the solution. Whilst the Government’s National Action Plan is a step in the right direction, it needs to be supported by legislation and enforcement to reinforce the efforts of both the veterinary and medical professionals to successfully tackle antibiotic resistance.”

New President

The Veterinary Ireland AGM & Conference featured the formal Address and handover of the Chain of Office from outgoing Veterinary Ireland President Mairead Wallace-Pigott, from Millstreet Veterinary Group, Millstreet, Co. Cork to incoming Veterinary Ireland President Dr. John V. O’Connor from Skerries, Co. Dublin, Chair of Veterinary Ireland’s companion animal interest group.

Dr. John O’Connor spoke on how the veterinary profession is at a crossroads and the many challenges facing veterinary practitioners in Ireland. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and sustainable food production are just some of the vitally important areas in which the profession has a key role to play. “Ensuring the long term sustainability of veterinary practice across the island of Ireland is of the utmost importance to ensure this role continues to be carried out in a responsible and effective manner.”

AMR – Why We Should be Worried and What Can We Do

Dr. Nuala O’Connor (ICGP) spoke about the scale of the problem of antibiotic resistance, why we should all be worried and what we can as individuals and professionals can do to help.

“Much of what we take for granted in modern medicine could not happen without antibiotics, for example hip replacements, cancer operations and treatments, kidney transplants and cardiac surgery. If we return to the pre-antibiotic era, common infections such as pneumonia, kidney infections or skin infections will result in death because there will be no effective antibiotics to treat them,” said GP Dr. Nuala O’Connor.

“Very few new types of antibiotic are being developed, which means that we must make sure that the ones we have remain effective against infections for the sake of future generations. The UK Analysis by Lord Jim O’Neill predicts 10 million deaths worldwide will be attributable to antibiotic resistant infections by 2050 if we continue to use this level of antibiotics and do not develop new ones.”

“Keeping antibiotics effective for future generations is everyone’s responsibility,” said Dr. O’Connor. “At the end of the day, each professional who prescribes an antibiotic or influences the decision to prescribe it must take personal responsibility to ensure that it was necessary.”

National Action Plan

Caroline Garvan M.V.B., Cert. Food Safety, MPhil is with the Medicines Division in the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine. Speaking at the Veterinary Ireland AGM & Conference in Killenard, she said that Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a complex global issue involving the use of antibiotics in both human and animal medicine.

“The veterinary practitioner is in a key position to influence the responsible use of antibiotics by the end user, but it is accepted that it is also difficult to manage people’s expectations and historic practices in relation to antibiotic usage,” said Ms. Garvan. “A renewed focus on improving animal health and disease prevention through improved biosecurity and husbandry practices, as well increased use of vaccines can work to reduce antibiotic usage.”

Ms. Garvan said that The National Action plan due to be finalised in the early part of 2017 will outline the collective actions to be undertaken across all sections of society. “Everyone has a role to play in keeping antibiotics as an effective tool to treat disease into the future,” said Ms. Garvan.

AMR Antimicrobial Resistance Prevention in Practice

Cormac Feeney MVB MRCVS CertES (Soft Tissue) presented an overview of AMR in practice. Cormac is a partner at Troytown GreyAbbey Equine Hospital in Kildare, with an interest in soft tissue surgery and orthopaedics.

“AMR is a growing concern for our patients and for ourselves as practitioners. The selection of resistant bacteria through the use of antimicrobials is a fact and it is our collective responsibility to be mindful of this issue not only in our administration of antimicrobials but also in our advice on biosecurity,” said Mr. Feeney.

The Irish Equine Centre has been analysing the prevalence of AMR in Ireland since 2000. Their data supports the fact that the minimum inhibitory concentration of antibiotics for our common bacterial infections is rising.

Growing Knowledge & Diagnostics Help Reduce Volumes of Antibiotics Used

“As practitioners the acceptance of AMR as a worsening problem is having an effect on how we practice,” said Mr. Feeney. “The growing knowledge base and availability of diagnostic techniques supporting accurate diagnosis of non- bacteria related infections – for example viral, fungal etc. - has had a significant reduction on the volumes of antibiotics used. It not only reduces the antibiotic usage but also allows us to treat the disease processes more effectively with better outcomes for our patients.”

Current practice supported by scientific data has also lead to a shift towards local administration of antibiotics rather than systemic administration. Examples of this include regional perfusion of antibiotics for a limb infection or intra-articular administration of antibiotics for elective clean arthroscopy. This protects the gut and respiratory flora to a large extent from the effects of the antibiotics reducing the risk of complications and reducing the selection of resistant bacterial phenotypes.

“The administration of antibiotics and selection of resistant bacteria within a patient also poses a biosecurity issue,” said Mr Feeney. “As clinicians we are acutely aware of the need for working biosecurity procedures. Simple procedures to manage the movement of patients and their flora, disinfection and

isolation facilities are very important. These procedures apply to our patients as well as our staff and ourselves.”

Disease Prevention Reduces Antibiotic Usage

Herd health planning, vaccination, biosecurity risk assessments and knowledge transfer are all examples of the actions of vets on farms to reduce disease and consequentially, antimicrobial usage. Denise Roche from Kynetec, in her presentation Trends in Medicine Use, outlined that there has been significant growth in the usage of vaccines over the past ten years, from 40% of total sales in 2004 to 58% in 2015.

“Regulatory Risk Management in Veterinary Practice” was discussed at the Veterinary Ireland Conference by Mathew Austin, Hayes Solicitors with Martin Hosegood and David Green from the Veterinary Defence Society.

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EDITORIAL FOOTNOTE:

The Veterinary Ireland Policy Document on Antimicrobial Resistance is published on the Veterinary Ireland website with a full list of recommendations, including legislative changes, listed on page 13:

http://www.veterinaryireland.ie/images/Veterinary_Ireland_Policy_on_Anti-Microbial_Resistance_2014.pdf

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