

Veterinary Ireland Media Release
15th October 2021



**IRISH VETERINARIANS - FRONT LINE ROLE
IN SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC AND ANIMAL HEALTH**

****Monitoring Technology * Future Prescribing & Resistance * Mastitis * Cattle Reproductive Goals * Respiratory Diagnostics ****

“It is generally accepted that Irish veterinarians have a major role to play in looking after the health and welfare of animals but also in supporting Ireland’s agri-food sector which has significant economic implications. The Covid-19 pandemic over the past two years has highlighted the front line role of Irish vets in food supply and the critical importance of recognising the interdependent scientific expertise of animal and human health, says **Conor Geraghty**, President of Veterinary Ireland and Chair of the Cattle Association of Veterinary Ireland, on the opening day of its conference in the **Galway Bay Hotel**, Upper Salthill (15th – 17th October, 2021).

“COVID-19 provided occasion for an unusual type of “One Health” collaboration in which veterinary laboratories became involved in testing human diagnostic specimens, while coping with bottlenecks in global supply chains for laboratory reagents. There are lessons to be learned from this experience for how we prepare for and respond to any future pandemic or zoonotic disease,” says **Dónal Sammin**, Assistant Secretary General Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine and the Department’s Head of Laboratories, speaking in the opening session at the CAVI conference.

“Across the globe, meat processing plants were identified as a high risk setting and several outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 infection have occurred in Irish meat plants over the past 18 months. Operational and environmental risk factors in meat plants may have resulted in ‘super-spreading events’. Ongoing studies in Irish meat plants are aimed at better understanding and mitigating these risks to the workforce,” says Mr. Sammin.

SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC AND ANIMAL HEALTH

Dr. J. Gabriel Beechinor, Director of Veterinary Sciences, Health Products Regulatory Authority & CVMP Member, Ireland is one of the participants in the workshop on Saturday 16th October, 2021 on ***‘Future Prescribing – Challenges on the Restrictions on the use of drugs in 2022.’***

Dr. Beechinor says that one of the aims of the EU legislation on veterinary medicines which applies from 28th January 2022, is to strengthen actions to fight antimicrobial resistance. This will be achieved by a range of measures, including:

- Reserving certain critically important antibiotics for exclusive use in humans;
- Restricting other important classes of antibiotics so that they can only be used in restricted circumstances where other antibiotics do not work;
- Eliminating preventative use of antibiotics in animals.

“While the details of some of these measures are still being elaborated, the direction of travel seems quite clear with a key focus on safeguarding public and animal health,” says Dr. Beechinor.

Other experts taking part in the Future Prescribing workshop sponsored by Animal Health Ireland include Conor Geraghty, Veterinary Ireland President and Chair of CAVI; John Keogh, CEO, Animal & Plant Health Association; Joe Moffitt, President, Veterinary Council of Ireland and Paul Corkery, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector at the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine.

“If an antimicrobial is administered or used incorrectly, this presents a risk to public or animal health. Therefore, antimicrobial veterinary medicinal products should only be available on veterinary prescription,” according to **Paul Corkery**.

“Cattle Vets have a key role in ensuring prudent use of antimicrobials and consequently they should prescribe the antimicrobial medicinal products based on their knowledge of antimicrobial resistance, their epidemiological and clinical knowledge and their understanding of the risk factors for the individual animal or group of animals.”

CHANGES AHEAD

“Large animal practitioners need to be prepared for changes coming on 28th January 2022. Anti-parasitics will become prescription only medicines (POM) in three months' time and vets need to ensure they have the necessary resources available to diagnose and prescribe these product categories in future - a significant change from the situation that pertains today,” says **John Keogh**, CEO Animal & Plant Health Association.

“Additionally, Ireland needs to record usage of antimicrobials by species under the new Veterinary Medicinal Products Regulations 2019/06 (VMP Regs) and submit these to the European Medicines Agency (EMA),” says Mr. Keogh.

“There are strategies which can be implemented at farm level to manage in a sector where there are restrictions on antibiotics - including increasing vaccine penetration rates, adopting new technology, and implementing improved management practices,” says MSD Animal Health's General Manager, **Fergal Morris**. His presentation at the CAVI conference explores experiences from other EU countries which have reduced their dependence on antibiotics including Denmark and the Netherlands.

MONITORING TECHNOLOGY CONTRIBUTING TO EFFICIENCY & SUSTAINABILITY

“29% of TAMS grant (Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme) payments in 2020 were for fully automated milking systems. The sales of Heat Detection and Health Monitoring Collars has grown by over 500% over the last 3 years,” says **Niall McGauran, Efficient Farm Systems**. In the CAVI session on Monitoring Technology, Niall McGauran explores why so many dairy farmers in particular are adopting many versions of automation and sensor technology and the difference it makes to the management of these farms.

“There are huge opportunities for the trusted advisors to these farm businesses to make use of the data harvested by these systems, to gain a better understanding of what is really happening with the welfare of the cows,” says Niall McGauran. “This data may allow a different type of working relationship in the future where earlier intervention and more accurate diagnosis leads to healthier herds and more sustainable farms.”

INCREASING LEVELS OF RESISTANCE DEMANDS CHANGES TO FIGHT AGAINST RESISTANCE

“Vets have a significant role to play in charting pending change and supporting clients and animals in navigating prudent use of medicines in the years ahead. Increasing levels of resistance demands changes in our ways of operating to fight against resistance to antimicrobials and antiparasitics,” according to **Joe Moffitt, President, Veterinary Council of Ireland**.

“Increased requirements for prescribing antimicrobial medicines alongside a requirement for veterinary prescription for antiparasitic medicines from January 2022 will bring a greater focus on husbandry and management practices across many farms. Vets are best placed to lead positive initiatives in this regard to ensure continued health and welfare across our farms nationwide.

VCI have offered definitions of terms contained in the VetMedRegs 2019/6 in our Code of Professional Conduct to ensure that animal remedies are safely prescribed and monitored based on a solid and informed threshold of knowledge of the animal/herd.”

Dr Catherine McAloon MVB DVMS DIP ECBHM MRCVS is European Specialist in Bovine Health & Lecturer in Farm Animal Clinical Studies at UCD. Her view is that regulatory changes have framed and catalyzed an urgent need to address mastitis control on all farms.

“Mastitis control and prudent prescribing go hand in hand and there is an urgent need to engage meaningfully with all farms in the area of milk quality, both to enable and facilitate selective dry cow therapy and to address milk quality issues where they exist, to decrease the need for antibiotics in the first place. The process of engagement with mastitis control is an involved one and requires both a knowledge of records and a detailed and sophisticated knowledge of the farm practices around mastitis control. Understanding the epidemiology of mastitis on farm is a key skill required to provide bespoke advice to farm clients.”

Peter Edmonson MVB FRCVS from UdderWise presenting on 'Mastitis 2022 and Beyond' highlights that selective dry cow therapy (SDCP) is coming - which has positives for farmers and can reduce clinical mastitis incidence. This is in light of the fact that we must question whether we need to use antibiotics all of the time, as a result of the global threat from the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria.

VETS CAN ADVISE ON CATTLE REPRODUCTIVE GOALS

There has never been a better opportunity for Irish vets to get involved with their clients' reproductive goals according to Dr. Patrick Buckley, Managing Director & IVP Vet, Animal Breeding Ireland. This is because of the advent of new reproductive technologies to the Irish market, such as the wider availability of sexed semen and the introduction of commercial In-vitro embryo production (IVP) by AB Ireland.

“Clients will look for further advice on these technologies and their vet should be their first port of call. As a profession we should look to lead the implementation of new technology and breeding strategies, it offers a chance to increase client engagement and practice profitability,” says Dr. Buckley. “It’s an exciting time to be involved in cattle practice in Ireland!”

RESPIRATORY DISEASE DIAGNOSTICS

In a second address within the Respiratory Stream at the CAVI conference, **Dr Catherine McAloon** explores how respiratory disease diagnostics can be very useful not only for pathogen identification but for many reasons such as supporting control strategies, prognostic indicators and measuring prevalence.

“Regardless of the test used there are a number of key factors to consider, appropriate case selection is a primary consideration when deciding to use any diagnostic test. Other things to consider are whether we can interpret the test as well as cost and logistical factors. In addition to tests for pathogen identification, diagnostics such as thoracic ultrasound are now very useful as part of the respiratory diagnostics toolkit. Control of bovine respiratory disease requires a holistic approach which requires knowledge of the pathogens involved but also the other risk factors driving disease.”

The Veterinary Ireland CAVI conference features a respiratory stream on Friday 15th October 2021. Sessions on Saturday 16th October 2021 include a Mastitis stream, a session on Monitoring Technology plus Fertility and Surgical streams.

The full conference programme and details about all of the participating speakers are available at www.caviconference.com

ENDS

Date: 15th October, 2021

Issued on behalf of Veterinary Ireland by:

Antonina Ni Dhuinn, Progress Communications
Tel: 087-2653683 Email nina@progresspr.ie