

Antimicrobial stewardship

Recommendations for veterinary school associated practices

General principles

- Every practice should have a written Antimicrobial Stewardship Policy
 - This policy should be reviewed annually by the practice
 - Usage will be audited annually through the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme to check compliance with policy
 - Usage should generally be reviewed or audited annually with each food animal client, for example using the Electronic Medicines Hub (AHDB). This is required under most farm assurance schemes.
- When preparing guidelines, organisations and practices should consult the European Medicines Agency definitions of antimicrobial categories for veterinary use, and be aware that lists are subject to continual review and updating.
- Antimicrobial prescribing should be aligned to the prevention of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- All decisions regarding prescribing should be checked and discussed with individual clients.
- Audit for multiple resistant pathogens in a hospital environment should be conducted by an infection control committee.
- Practices should consider appointing an Antimicrobial and Infection Control Champion.
- Farm animal veterinarians should be encouraged to register with the Farm Vet Champions programme and be encouraged to set practice or individual SMART goals towards optimising antimicrobial use.

Essential elements of an antimicrobial stewardship policy

Use of EMA Category B antimicrobials

- EMA Category B antimicrobials should not be used in food animal practice, except in strictly last-resort circumstances .
- All veterinary surgeons should avoid prescribing EMA Category B antimicrobials other than in exceptional circumstances.
- EMA Category B antimicrobials should never be prescribed without clear justification, only when justified by Antimicrobial Susceptibility Tests (ASTs) including culture and sensitivity testing.
 - Practices should consider requiring a team decision for prescribing the Category B antimicrobial in question. This could be led by a responsible person, who has relevant expertise such as the RCVS Knowledge Farm Vet Champions course

Prophylaxis and meta-prophylaxis

- Routine use of antimicrobials should be avoided.
- Where antimicrobials are used preventatively or to treat a group of animals, decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis and must be clinically justifiable. This falls under EU Regulation 2019/6 in 2022.

Audit and review

- All veterinary practices should audit antimicrobial use as appropriate for the working situation, including using the RCVS Knowledge VetTeamAMR Clinical Audit Tool, and consider collaborating with others in order to benchmark use.
- An annual audit, or broader review if appropriate, should also identify AMR infections to build an evidence base as to how best to treat and prevent future outbreaks of disease.
- A responsible person or an Infection Control Committee within practices, or an equivalent, should undertake these audits, informed by training including the RCVS Knowledge tools.
- Practices should follow good practice guidance such as that provided by the BVA in their Good Practice Guide.

Sector specific requirements

- All sectors should continually strive to optimise antimicrobial use. This section provides further detail on what policies practices should follow. Practices should consult the [BVA Seven Point Plan](#) and the new [RCVS Knowledge training](#).

Farm animals

- Practices should audit annual antimicrobial use for every client including prophylactic prescribing. The aim of the audit is to assess usage with the ultimate aim of optimising - and where appropriate, minimising - the amount of antimicrobials prescribed and ensuring Category B products are only used as a last resort.
- Practices should ensure they are up to date with the requirements of appropriate assurance schemes (such as Red Tractor or retailer supplier schemes) and be able to inform clients as to how they impact on prescribing.
- Practices should follow relevant policies and guidance documents in the area, e.g. from BVA, BCVA, RUMA, SVS & PVS.

Equine

- Practices should follow the British Equine Veterinary Association guidelines on antimicrobial prescribing and the [BSAVA ProtectMe poster](#).

Small animal

- Practices should follow the [BSAVA \(ProtectMe Poster\)](#) guidelines on antimicrobial prescribing, and [Ceva GRAM independent guidelines](#).