

# Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

## Background

Antibiotics (sometimes called antimicrobials) are drugs used to kill or slow the growth of bacteria that cause infectious disease. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when some bacteria develop an ability to resist the drug, and continue to live despite the presence of antibiotics. While any antibiotic use can eventually lead to growing AMR, the problem is compounded when antibiotics are inappropriately used or overused—whether that happens in human medicine or animal agriculture. The concern with growing AMR is that common bacterial infections could one day become untreatable. As a result, some argue that the use of antibiotics in agriculture should be curtailed, or discontinued all together.

## Guiding Principle

Continued access to antibiotics is required for cattle feeders to exercise proper care of their animals, and to prevent, control, and treat infectious bacterial diseases. At the same time, cattle feeders also recognize and embrace the role they play in addressing AMR. Cattle feeders are committed to good animal care practices that puts the health and safety of Canadians first, and this includes raising healthy cattle to provide Canadians with safe and high quality beef.

## Position

ACFA believes that the use of antibiotics in cattle represents a low risk of contributing to AMR. First, the vast majority of antibiotics used in cattle are not used at all in human medicine, which negates any human health risk. It is estimated that in excess of 90% of all antibiotics used in cattle are low risk Class IV ionophores. Second, antibiotics that are important in human medicine and carry a risk of growing antimicrobial resistance are used only when prescribed by a veterinarian. Third, all cattle feeders have a valid and active veterinarian-client relationship to ensure the careful and prudent use of antibiotics. Fourth, cattle feeders employ a number of strategies to ensure appropriate antibiotic usage:

- Using vaccines to reduce disease and the usage of antibiotics;
- Employing good animal husbandry practices and working with nutritionists to ensure high quality feed rations;
- Monitoring cattle daily to identify disease, prevent its spread, and reduce antibiotic usage;
- Using high-risk antibiotics only when prescribed, and under the clinical oversight of licensed veterinarians;
- Working with licensed veterinarians to train staff and better identify and diagnose disease;
- Working with licensed veterinarians to develop treatment protocols and to follow prudent drug use guidelines;
- Following the treatment protocols and ensuring the right drug is used in the right way;
- Following all regulations and requirements of Health Canada, CFIA, and other government regulators;
- Treating for the shortest duration possible to ensure effective and rapid response; and
- Maintaining accurate vaccination, feeding, and antibiotic treatment records.

## Actions

- ACFA supports and participates in the surveillance activities being conducted through the *Canadian Integrated Program for Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance (CIPARS)* at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), which monitors trends in antimicrobial usage and AMR.
- ACFA supports the *Federal Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance and Use in Canada*, and will work with government to represent the perspectives of the cattle feeding sector. ACFA will engage in the leadership, surveillance, and stewardship components of the action plan.
- ACFA supports the regulatory changes being proposed by *Health Canada's Veterinary Drug Directorate (VDD)* to: 1) remove all growth promotion claims from antimicrobials that are important to human medicine; 2) make these same feed and water antimicrobials by prescription only through licensed veterinarians; 3) strengthen control and licensing over those who have access to active pharmaceutical ingredients; and 4) stop the illegal importation of antimicrobials.
- ACFA supports additional regulatory reform that would make all antimicrobials (including those given by injection) by prescription only through a licensed veterinarian working with a cattle feeder in a valid veterinary-client-patient relationship.
- ACFA supports ongoing research to find alternatives to antimicrobials, including new vaccines and feed additives.

## Key Messages

- *Cattle feeders are committed to sound animal care practices that put the health and safety of Canadians first, including the prudent usage of antibiotics.*
- *Cattle feeders use antibiotics carefully in order to limit the risk of growing antimicrobial resistance.*
- *All cattle feeders have a valid veterinarian-client relationship.*
- *Antibiotics that are important in human medicine and carry a risk of growing antimicrobial resistance are used only when prescribed by a veterinarian.*

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