

Companion Animal Antibiotics

Responsible use of antibiotics plays a very important role in safeguarding the health and welfare of companion animals. The timely treatment of bacterial infections can alleviate and prevent further suffering and in the case of zoonotic disease (disease that can be transferred between animals and people) even prevent infection in people.

The use of antibiotics in companion animal medicine and surgery has allowed the effective treatment of a wide range of common bacterial infections and diseases.

Additionally, the availability of antibiotics has been crucial for successful outcomes in specialised areas of veterinary medicine, including orthopaedics and oncology, when bacterial infections can arise as complications. Antibiotics may also be appropriate in certain scenarios for immunosuppressed or debilitated animals undergoing surgery or in contact with infected animals.

With further advancements in companion animal medicine and surgery on the horizon, there will be a continued need for access to an appropriate range of antibiotics.

NOAH is a member of the recently formed RUMA Companion Animal Group, which with the pedigree of success in relation to farm animal antimicrobial stewardship, will be building on current initiatives for antimicrobial stewardship in companion animals, such as provision of advice and guidance on accurate diagnosis, prescribing, practice benchmarking and owner compliance. We fully support the veterinary profession's commitment to the responsible use of antimicrobials, through for example, the RCVS Knowledge Stewardship Scheme, and welcome initiatives such as the incentivisation for the development of improved diagnostics to assist excellence in prescribing.

It is important to take a holistic view and owner compliance remains vital – we need confirmation of the owners' ability to give the correct dose at the correct time intervals and therefore to ensure the animal receives its full treatment for its health and welfare including the need for further treatments. The ability to ensure compliance is a factor a veterinary surgeon will need to take into account of when making prescribing decisions, in choosing the most appropriate medicine. We will continue to help educate pet owners about the need for correct diagnosis, that they should follow instructions, about why sometimes an antibiotic is not appropriate and the importance of reducing the need for antibiotics through good preventive health care for pets.

We all share responsibility in ensuring that antibiotics are used appropriately – as little as possible, but as much as necessary and ensuring the patient receives the correct dosage for the appropriate period of time to successfully treat the patient. It is in the best interest of companion animals and their owners, veterinary surgeons and the animal medicines sector to maintain the effectiveness and availability of antibiotics.

June 2021