



# BVA policy position on the responsible use of antimicrobials in food producing animals

## Executive summary

BVA recognises antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as an issue of critical importance to society as a whole and is committed to providing leadership on this issue. Antimicrobials are essential to both veterinary and human medicine to treat infectious diseases. Continued availability of all existing antimicrobial classes and the development of new ones for veterinary use are essential to maintain the health and welfare of animals and the protection of public health.

A reduction in the use of antimicrobials in animals under the care of veterinary surgeons can only be achieved through improvements to animal health and welfare via disease prevention strategies, including improved animal husbandry and management.

Our overall aim is responsible prescribing and responsible use across the profession, industry, and in the wider context of One Health, recognising synergies between animal health, public health and environmental specialists. To fulfil this aim, BVA makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Prescribing veterinary surgeons should always carefully consider the use of an antimicrobial, with special attention given to the risk of resistance to these products as part of the benefit/risk assessment.

**Recommendation 2:** Use of Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP CIAs), as defined by the European Medicines Agency, must be restricted for use used as a last resort under veterinary direction, backed up by either sensitivity or diagnostic testing. Where the welfare of the individual animal, herd or flock, and wider context are considered, euthanasia is an alternative treatment option. Off label use must be reserved for exceptional circumstances, following appropriate sensitivity testing.

**Recommendation 3:** In the interests of animal welfare, critically important antibiotics should remain available for veterinary use. They provide key treatments against some animal diseases where there are currently few or no viable alternatives.

**Recommendation 7:** Each veterinary practice should develop a written policy or protocol covering the circumstances in which metaphylaxis is considered appropriate. Where antimicrobials are used for metaphylaxis that the clinical justification should be recorded on each occasion.

**Recommendation 8:** Any off-