

Health professionals care for animals and people

Doctors, Dentists and Veterinarians advise "How to use antibiotics responsibly"

Antibiotics are vital to treating and preventing the spread of disease in animals and humans. However the risk that the bacteria causing a disease will develop a resistance to an antibiotic increases every time it is used. Once bacteria are resistant, the antibiotic is ineffective and can no longer treat the disease. Help us save lives and make sure that antibiotics stay effective now and in the future by following these tips:

► "Antibiotics are not always the answer"

Not every infectious disease can be treated with antibiotics (e.g. viral infections, colds and flu). Sometimes you can recover easily without using them (e.g. superficial cat bite wounds). To protect your own health and that of others, don't demand antibiotics when your doctor, dentist or veterinarian assures you that they are not needed.

► "Keep yourself, your family and your animal healthy"

Antibiotics should not be shared between people or between animals. Do not re-use tablets prescribed for an earlier illness. They can be inappropriate for the current condition, toxic, out of date, or contaminated. Certainly do not give human medicines to your animal. This could be dangerous.

► "Wash your hands often"

People's hands are the most common way germs are spread. Although some of these germs are harmless, others cause diseases, like stomach bugs, and transmit resistant bacteria such as MRSA/MRSP, even between animals and people. Washing your hands properly with soap and water is the single most important thing you can do to help reduce the spread of infections between you, other people and your animal. Pay special attention to wash your hands before preparing food or eating and after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or petting your animal.

► "Diagnostic tests might be needed"

In order for your doctor, dentist or veterinarian to know whether treatment with antibiotics is really necessary and if so, which antibiotic will work best, a laboratory test might be needed. This will enable your health professional to prescribe the right antibiotic for the right bacteria. Older antibiotics, such as Penicillin are often as effective as modern antibiotics.

► "Follow the dosage and instructions"

Make sure that you take or give your loved ones, including your animal, all the recommended doses of an antibiotic, as prescribed by your doctor, dentist or veterinarian; even if you or your animal seem to feel better after a few doses. Not only will this help cure the current infection, but it will also help to keep the bacteria from discovering new ways of being resistant to the antibiotic.

► "Talk to your doctor, dentist or veterinarian"

If you have worries or questions in relation to antibiotics, do not hesitate to discuss these with your health professional. He/she is your expert and best advisor. A good relationship with your doctor, dentist or veterinarian, is the pillar of healthy and happy people and animals.

- Antibiotic resistance is the condition when antibiotics no longer work against the (bacterial) infection that they previously worked well against.
- Infections caused by antibiotic resistant bacteria can be difficult to treat and last for a long time. In severe cases, no effective antibiotics can be found, so the disease cannot be treated, and may cause death.
- Antibiotic resistant bacteria that cause infections can spread to family and friends and infect our animals as well.
- Using antibiotics only when needed and taking them as directed can help to prevent the spread of resistant bacteria.
- One Health has been defined as "the collaborative effort of multiple disciplines — working locally, nationally, and globally — to attain optimal health for people, animals and the environment".

GLOSSARY

Antibiotics: drugs that kill disease-causing agents such as bacteria. They are not effective against viruses.

MRSA: methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, highly-resistant bacteria that are typically found in human hospitals but can cause infection in animals.

MRSP: methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius*, a highly-resistant form of bacteria that typically cause infections in animals but on rare occasions have caused human infection.

