



**CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER**

File ref: 2017

To Registered Veterinarians  
(Through State and Territory Veterinary Surgeons Boards and the Australian Veterinary Association)

Dear colleague

### **Responsible and Prudent Use of Antimicrobials in Veterinary Practice**

I am writing to you on the issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), identified as a critical global issue, with the World Health Organisation describing it as an 'urgent global health priority'.

This is a timely reminder to reflect on the significant role we, as veterinarians, play in limiting and minimising the spread of AMR. A number of representations have been made to me on this issue from animal health professionals and organisations. I am therefore seeking your cooperation as we collectively address this complex issue with our counterparts in human health, both here and overseas.

I have been working on AMR for a several years now, and together with the Australian Chief Medical Officer, I co-Chair the *Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance*. We have collaborated with governments, non-government organisations, professional bodies (such as the Australian Veterinary Association and veterinary faculties), research organisations and our human health counterparts to shape Australia's first [National AMR Strategy 2015-2019](#) and associated [Implementation Plan](#).

As a member of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Australia has also contributed to the development of the [OIE Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance and the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials](#). Australia continues to work with the international animal health community through contributions to the OIE to address the issue of AMR, such as the development of [OIE Code Standards relating to AMR](#).

Our work internationally also facilitates exports to overseas markets, taking advantage of our favourable public health, animal health and environmental health status. As veterinarians, we play a role in protecting this with regard to AMR, to safeguard public health and support our export industries. To avoid AMR becoming a future barrier to trade, we need to prepare now and implement changes, such as to our prescribing habits.

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As veterinarians, our prescribing rights come with significant responsibilities. As a prescribing veterinarian, you can help minimise the spread of AMR by:

1. Pausing and considering each antimicrobial prescription.
2. Talking to clients about ways to minimise the use of antimicrobials.
3. Promoting and applying best practice biosecurity and hygiene measures.
4. Using published therapeutic guidelines, where available.

Veterinarians should also base their choice of antibiotic on culture and sensitivity testing, where possible.

I wish to reassure you that the Australian Chief Medical Officer is also working closely with our human health colleagues to remind them of their responsibilities. The veterinary and medical professions need to work together to ensure a combined, global effort towards preserving the effectiveness of important antimicrobials for the necessity of human health, and animal health and welfare.

Veterinarians are part of the solution to safeguard the efficacy of antimicrobials. Your commitment to minimise the spread of AMR contributes to the collective national efforts of the medical and veterinary professions to preserve the effectiveness of antimicrobials.

Further information on national AMR activities can be accessed at <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/animal/health/amr>, and international activities at <http://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/amr/>. In addition, you may find my plenary address on antimicrobial resistance at the Australian Veterinary Association's 2017 Annual Conference useful. A recording is available to download at <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/amr>. I note that fighting antimicrobial resistance is also one of the Australian Veterinary Association's strategic priorities, with a number of resources available at <http://www.ava.com.au/amr>.

Should you wish to discuss the issues raised in this letter, please email [AMR@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:AMR@agriculture.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



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