



POSITION STATEMENT

Antibiotic Use in Animal Husbandry

Background

Antibiotic resistance is a growing problem in Canada and worldwide. Antibiotic resistance refers to the inability of bacterial infections to be treated with one or more antibiotics that have been successfully used to treat them in the past. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) are two more commonly known antibiotic-resistant organisms, but others are emerging as pathogens of concern in our healthcare facilities. These include extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL) - producing organisms and carbapenemase - producing *Enterobacteriaceae* (CPE). We are moving towards a post-antibiotic era; patients are now dying from infections that physicians have been successfully treating for decades.¹

While some antibiotic resistance is driven by antibiotic use in human medicine, other antibiotic resistance has its source in veterinary medicine and agriculture. In Canada, there is little control over which antibiotics and in what quantities are given to food animals or the ability of animal owners to purchase locally or import antibiotics as they see fit.²

The federal and provincial governments regulate which antibiotics can be used in animals. These regulations restrict the use of first-line human antibiotics for animal medicine, but this approach is too limited as many of the antibiotics used in animals are closely related to those used in humans.³

Certain antibiotics are used as illness preventers or growth promoters, while others not indicated for these uses, are still given to food animals to achieve these results. The use of antibiotics for prophylaxis or growth promotion, whether indicated or extra-label, can be a strong driver of antibiotic resistance.⁴

Everyone who has access to antibiotics must act responsibly and prudently with them. Provincial governments should ban the prophylactic or growth-promoting use of antibiotics, whether extra-label or indicated, in animal husbandry. This step is fundamental to preserving the effectiveness of antibiotics.

A veterinary prescription-only standard of access to antibiotics for animals should be instituted. The provinces should require a veterinary prescription and/or supervision for all antibiotics used on farms.⁵ At this time, Quebec is the only province that has this requirement. Outside of Quebec, the current practice allows for unsupervised and potentially dangerous use of these important medications.

Position Statement

CHICA-Canada supports the Canadian Medical Association's call for both federal and provincial governments to act by amending legislation to prohibit the unregulated use of antibiotics in animal husbandry.

Stakeholders

This position statement is directed to the bodies responsible for the development of regulations for the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry.

Participants in Development of Position Statement

This position statement was developed by the Board of Directors of CHICA-Canada.

Bibliography

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