European Antibiotic Awareness Day 2012

Antibiotic resistance: “Vets are part of the solution”

Bruxelles, 21 November 2012 - Antibiotic resistance is a true ‘One Health’ issue, and veterinarians are part of the solution as gatekeepers of antimicrobial use in animals, said Dr Christophe Buhot, president of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE).

Speaking at the press conference held on the occasion of 5th edition of the European Antibiotic Awareness Day, on 18 November, he added that the FVE is a long-standing advocate of responsible use of antimicrobials, and had been very active in this field.

Recent initiatives included active membership of EPRUMA, the organisation of an international conference on Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and a European-wide survey on veterinary prescription behaviour (in collaboration with the Heads of Medicines Agencies in Europe).

Education and information were the cornerstones of fighting AMR, he said, not just of veterinarians and farmers, but also of citizens and pet owners, “who should realise that antibiotics are not an ‘automatic’ solution to all ailments”. For this purpose, FVE had published two leaflets – one for veterinary practitioners and one for policy makers – to increase the awareness of AMR and to give guidance for the responsible use of antimicrobials. Leaflets for pet owners and for farmers are currently in preparation.

When asked to comment on the resolution on antimicrobial resistance that had been recently adopted by the European Parliament’s ENVI committee, and in particular on the suggestion ‘to separate the right to prescribe from the right to sell antimicrobials in order to eradicate economic incentives to prescribe’, Dr Buhot said:

“Antimicrobial resistance is a complex issue for which there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution such as ‘decoupling’ of prescription and dispensing, but which requires rigorous action from all players and at multiple levels. In the Netherlands, where there is no ‘decoupling’, veterinarians have greatly contributed to decrease the antibiotic consumption by over 50% over the past 3 years, and also in France a reduction of 30% is realised.”

In other countries, such as Denmark, the compulsory monthly herd health visit by the veterinary practitioner had also contributed to a more responsible use.

“We fully agree with the vision of the EU upcoming Animal Health Law that prevention is better than cure, and such a preventive herd health scheme would
certainly help to ensure a more responsible use of antibiotics. Veterinarians are part of the solution to keep antibiotics effective.”

Data collected by the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) show that over the past few years, there has been a Europe-wide increase of antibiotic resistance and of multidrug resistance in Gram-negative bacteria such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Escherichia coli*. ECDC data also show that the consumption of carbapenems, a major ‘last-line’ class of antibiotics – increased significantly in human medicine in Europe between 2007 and 2010.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 200 000 veterinarians.

2. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe.

3. The FVE has been at the forefront of the campaign for containing resistance for many years:
   - FVE position on the maintenance of antimicrobials’ efficacy (http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/medicines/fve_10_056_maintenance_antimicrobials%27_efficacy.pdf)
   - FVE is a founding member of the European Platform for the Responsible Use of Medicines in Animals (www.epruma.eu)
   - FVE held a conference on “Antimicrobial Resistance: a true one-health issue” in November 2011 and on Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* in 2008
   - HMA-V and FVE did a survey on prescribing behaviour of veterinarians in March this year. First results will be published in autumn 2012
   - The ‘Berenschot’ report, ordered by the Dutch Ministry, precisely examined the effects of unlinking prescription and sale of veterinary medicinal products by veterinarians. It concluded that restricting the sales by veterinarians would not be effective; moreover it recommended strengthening the position of the veterinary practitioner as ‘gatekeeper’; http://www.fve.org/uploads/publications/docs/berenschot%20report_02_2010.pdf

For further information, consult the FVE website http://www.fve.org or contact the FVE Secretariat on tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org