

Impressive decrease in veterinary antibiotic use shows good uptake of Responsible Use principles in Europe

Brussels, 23 November 2021; With more than a decade of data collection from countries across Europe, the European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption (ESVAC) report has today registered an overall decline (since 2011) in sales of antimicrobials for animal health purposes of 43.2%, with a noticeable decrease in sales identified for some of the highest-selling countries. Clearly demonstrating the measurable outcomes of many years of awareness-raising and training on the Responsible Use of antibiotics, this supports the growing acknowledgement that Europe's animal sector has made solid progress.

Responsible Use efforts not only extend to the amounts of antibiotics used for animal health purposes, but also the classes of antibiotics used. Encompassing two years of sales data (2019 & 2020), the report also outlines continued decreases in sales of veterinary antibiotics regarded as medically important: 32.8% for 3rd- and 4th-generation cephalosporins; 76.5% for polymyxins, 12.8% for fluoroquinolones and 85.4% for other quinolones.

“This is the result of more than a decade of efforts to increase disease prevention and improve animal health management through better hygiene practices, biosecurity measures, vaccine use and nutrition. Any variations between member states in the outcomes of the report should now be analysed in a comprehensive manner. Moving forward we need to know more than just the amounts of antibiotics used for animals. We need to understand why they're used, what infections they're needed for, and what we can do further to reduce the need.”

We very much welcome the further steps taken to foster more in-depth consideration of veterinary antibiotic use in Europe with the new EU rules on veterinary medicines coming into force in January 2022 which stipulate that sales volumes should be reported by animal species and antimicrobial product. This will help to gain a better understanding of which interventions could be made to further reduce the need to use antibiotics in animals,” said Roxane Feller, AnimalhealthEurope Secretary General.

Earlier this year the substantial progress made in the animal sector was recognised in the [third JIACRA report](#) which presents data from the agencies' monitoring networks from 2016-18. The joint report from EMA, EFSA and ECDC noted that the use of antibiotics has decreased and was lower in food-producing animals than in humans in Europe.

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Notes for editors:

- The European Medicines Agency (EMA) started the [ESVAC project](#) in April 2010. Now containing data from 31 countries, it is a harmonised approach for the collection and reporting of data on the use of antimicrobial agents in animals from EU and European Economic Area (EEA) Member States.
- [AnimalhealthEurope](#) represents 12 of Europe's leading manufacturers of animal medicines and 17 national associations in 19 countries, covering 90% of the European Market. The animal health industry provides tools for veterinarians to care for around 700 million animals in Europe, supporting 5.7 million livestock farms and 85 million pet-owning households across Europe.