

Responsible Prescribing of Antimicrobial Drugs in Animal Health Care Through Antimicrobial Stewardship

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Introduction

Antimicrobial resistance is a complex and evolving global public health issue. Resistance to antimicrobial drugs is increasing as a result of the cumulative effects of their past and continuing use in both animal and human medicine. This position statement has been developed to assist the public and the veterinary profession in understanding the College Council's position related to promoting and supporting veterinarian stewardship in the responsible prescribing of antimicrobial drugs in animals.

Position Statement

The authority to prescribe drugs is a privilege that is afforded to few professionals. The right to both prescribe and dispense pharmaceuticals is afforded to even fewer. With this right comes the responsibility to prescribe and dispense in accordance with the standards of practice of the profession.

The growing increase in antimicrobial resistance continues to place an important societal duty on veterinarians to act as stewards with respect to the prudent and responsible use of antimicrobial drugs.

Every veterinarian has a stewardship role in the effort to combat antimicrobial resistance and to preserve the effectiveness of antimicrobial drugs for necessary use in both animals and humans. As part of good stewardship, the College expects a veterinarian to assume an active leadership role by ensuring their understanding of the need for antimicrobial oversight, the existing government directives, the evolving science related to pharmaceuticals, and the most appropriate current use of



antimicrobial drugs with a specific species and a specific condition. The College sees this as a core professional responsibility that is central to animal welfare and public protection and encourages veterinarians to incorporate stewardship into their daily practice.

A veterinarian must only prescribe antimicrobial drugs within a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) and where strong clinical evidence demonstrates medical need.

Licensed veterinarians, as privileged prescribers, must remain aware that the responsible prescribing of antimicrobial drugs is crucial for preserving their efficacy and availability. It is important for veterinarians to be vigilant in their oversight of drug management and to remain ever-cognizant that there are risks as well as benefits associated with antimicrobial use in animals for the greater public good.

The College supports the development and availability of resources for veterinarians that advance antimicrobial stewardship when performing professional activities. Further, the College supports veterinarians in their leadership of the education of clients about antimicrobial use to influence perspectives and treatment choices that enhance stewardship. The College continually seeks to understand and assume its role with partners at the provincial, national, and international level to combat the spread of antimicrobial resistance.

Resources

World Organization for Animal Health, Antimicrobial Resistance (<https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/global-initiatives/antimicrobial-resistance/>)

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, *Veterinary Oversight of Antimicrobial Use – a Pan-Canadian Framework of Professional Standards for Veterinarians* (<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/media/zvtlw03q/veterinary-oversight-of-antimicrobial-use-a-pan-canadian-framework-for-professional-standards-for-veterinarians-pdf.pdf>)

Growing Forward 2, Antibiotic Use in Food-Producing Animals in Ontario: A Study of the Current Practices and Perceptions of Ontario Veterinarians (<https://viewer.joomag.com/growing-forward-2-final-report/0699825001446228188>)



Health Canada, Categorization of Antimicrobial Drugs Based on Importance in Human Medicine, 2009 (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/veterinary-drugs/antimicrobial-resistance/categorization-antimicrobial-drugs-based-importance-human-medicine.html>)

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario veterinarians in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained. The College encourages you to refer to the website (www.cvo.org) to ensure you are referring to the most recent version of any document.