



Veterinarians care for animals and people

“How to use antibiotics responsibly: advice for companion animal owners”

Antibiotic resistance in companion animals – much like in their human counterparts – is becoming a greater challenge. Antibiotic resistance occurs when the bacteria causing the infection are not affected by the antibiotic making it ineffective as treatment.

▶ **Antibiotics are not always the answer**

Not every infectious disease requires antibiotic treatment (e.g. viral infections, superficial cat bite wounds). Don't demand antibiotics when your veterinarian says they are not needed.

▶ **Antibiotics are lifesaving drugs**

Antibiotics are vital to treat and prevent disease in animals and humans. But the risk that the organism causing the disease will develop resistance to them increases every time they are used.

To make sure antibiotics stay effective now and in the future, they must be strictly controlled, used only when really necessary and with caution.

▶ **“Keep your animal healthy”**

A healthy animal is better equipped to fight off infections. Make sure to keep your animal healthy by feeding food with a high nutritional value, provide a healthy lifestyle, having your animal regularly vaccinated and dewormed and keeping up its annual examinations by your veterinarian. If your animal gets sick, go to the veterinarian immediately.

▶ **“Do not self-medicate your animal”**

Do not share antibiotics between animals or re-use tablets prescribed for an earlier illness. They can be inappropriate for the current condition, toxic for certain animals, out of date or contaminated. Certainly do not give human medicines to your animal, they could be dangerous and ineffective.

▶ **“Wash your hands after petting your animal”**

People's hands are the most common way germs are spread. Although these germs can be harmless they may also be those that cause diseases, like stomach bugs and resistant bacteria such as MRSA/MRSP between animals and people. Washing your hands properly with soap and warm water is the single most important thing you can do to help reduce the spread of infections between you and your animal.

▶ **“Diagnostic tests might be needed”**

In order for your veterinarian to know whether treatment with antibiotics is really necessary and if so, which antibiotic will work best, a laboratory test might be needed. Your veterinarian will then be able to prescribe the right antibiotic for the right bacteria. Older antibiotics, such as Penicillin are often as effective as modern antibiotics.

▶ **“Follow the dosage and instructions”**

Make sure that you give your animal all the recommended doses of an antibiotic as prescribed by your veterinarian; even if your animal got better after a few doses. Not only will this help cure the current infection, but it will also help to keep the bacteria from discovering new ways of being resistant to the antibiotic.

▶ **“Talk to your veterinarian”**

If you have worries or questions in relation to antibiotic resistance, do not hesitate to discuss these with your veterinarian. He/she is your expert and best advisor. Build up a good relationship with your veterinarian, in order to work together to keep your companion health and happy.

GLOSSARY

Antibiotics: drugs that kill disease-causing agents such as bacteria. They are not effective against viruses.

MRSA: meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, highly-resistant bacteria that are typically found in human hospitals but can cause infection in animals.

MRSP: meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius*, a highly-resistant form of bacteria that typically cause infections in animals but on rare occasions have caused human infection.

