

The use of antibiotics in food producing animals

1. BVA recognises antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as an issue of critical importance to society as a whole and is committed to providing leadership on this issue. Our overall aspiration is to reduce the use of antibiotics in animals under our care alongside improving the health and welfare of those animals, particularly through disease prevention strategies.
2. It is not possible to raise animals in sterile conditions; infections in animals are a reality and antibiotics will remain vital to treat bacterial infections in individual animals and in groups of animals managed within the same environment. Metaphylaxis will continue to be necessary in the face of disease outbreaks in groups of animals in order to minimise disease spread. Oral antibiotic treatments are effective and efficient methods of medicine delivery in some populations of terrestrial and aquatic animals.
3. BVA does not support the habitual use of prophylactic antibiotics. Animal husbandry systems reliant on such use must be interrogated and action plans developed to limit repeat disease occurrence and investigate alternative strategies for disease control, which may in turn impact upon the cost of food.
4. BVA opposes the introduction of arbitrary, non-evidence based target setting; such targets, to reduce antibiotic use, risk restricting vets' ability to treat animal diseases, which could have serious public health and animal welfare implications. However, we support the use of evidence-based targets to reduce antibiotic usage in animal agriculture, which are likely to form part of the solution to address AMR globally.