



Horse Vets Show High Compliance with Antimicrobial Best Practice



Released on 15/11/2013



Ahead of the European Antimicrobial Awareness Day (EAAD), to be held on Monday 18 November 2013, the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) reports that around two thirds of the UK's equine practices have now adopted policies on the responsible use of antimicrobials. The uptake is predominantly in response to the Association's education and awareness campaign launched on EAAD in November last year.

Antimicrobial resistance is an emerging clinical problem that is recognised internationally as one of the largest threats to human and animal health. All major health and veterinary organisations are working to try and limit the development of resistance so that effective antimicrobials can be retained for use in clinical practice.

A study last year showed that only one per cent of veterinary practices had written policies for antimicrobial use in horses, but following the launch of BEVA's **Protect ME** campaign 12 months ago around 66% of equine practices now adhere to self-imposed policies governing the responsible use of antimicrobials.

Mark Bowen, Associate Professor of Veterinary Internal Medicine at The University of Nottingham School of Veterinary Medicine and Science and one of the BEVA Council Members involved with developing the **Protect ME** campaign said: "To date we have had around 2500 downloads of BEVA's Protect ME toolkit, which offers a range of tools to promote antimicrobial stewardship. We are delighted with the profession's voluntary engagement with this important issue. It clearly demonstrates the weight equine practice places on preserving effective antibiotics for the future."

Wendy Furness, a Director of XLVets, a group of 52 independently owned, progressive veterinary practices, continued: "Protect ME has been voluntarily adopted by the majority of our equine member practices. Each of these practices has a BEVA Protect ME champion within them to coordinate the project. It is surprisingly easy to develop bespoke antimicrobial practice policies using the BEVA toolkit documents and we have subsequently seen a reduction in the use of protected agents by up to 95% within the XL group."

The focus of this year's Protect ME campaign is on client education. Posters, fact sheets and light-hearted comic strips have been produced for BEVA members to share with their clients at the surgery or through social media. These resources will help practices explain to horse owners about the importance of antimicrobial resistance, so that they understand why antibiotics are not always required. They also promote good hand hygiene, to decrease contamination between horses and between horses and people, further reducing pressure to use antibiotics.

The Equine Veterinary Journal (EVJ) was the first publication worldwide to adopt an antimicrobial stewardship policy in its author guidelines. Other journals are being encouraged to follow suit. EVJ editor Celia Marr said: "There has been widespread support for EVJ's antimicrobial stewardship policy by authors, indicating the importance that all parts of the equine profession place on the judicious use of antimicrobials. EVJ will be releasing a special online issue on antimicrobial resistance in 2014 to reiterate our commitment."

The Protect ME toolkit is free to BEVA members and can be downloaded [here](#)