
MEPs back plans to halt spread of drug resistance from animals to humans

- Curb use of antibiotics on farms to keep drug-resistant bacteria out of food
- Antimicrobials to be reserved for humans
- Measures to encourage innovation
- Imported foods will have to meet EU standards

Plans to limit the use of antibiotics on farms, in order to keep food free from resistant bacteria, were adopted by Parliament on Thursday.

Veterinary medicines must not under any circumstances serve to improve the performance or compensate for poor animal husbandry, says the new law. It would limit the use of antimicrobials as a preventive measure, in the absence of clinical signs of infection (known as prophylactic use) to single animals and not groups. The drugs can be used only when fully justified by a veterinarian in cases where there is a high risk of infection.

Metaphylactic use (i.e. treating a group of animals when one shows signs of infection) should be a last resort, and only occur once a veterinarian has diagnosed infection and prescribed the antimicrobials.

Reserving antibiotics for humans

To help tackle antimicrobial resistance, the law would empower the European Commission to select antimicrobials to be reserved only for treating humans.

Imports: EU rules to preclude use of antibiotics as growth promoters

As advocated by MEPs, the text also imposes that imported foodstuffs will have to meet EU standards and that antibiotics cannot be used to enhance the growth of animals.

Innovation

To encourage research into new antimicrobials, the legislation provides for incentives, including longer periods of protection for technical documentation on new medicines and commercial

protection for innovative active substances. It also protects significant investments in data generated to improve an existing antimicrobial product or to keep it on the market.

The agreement with EU ministers was adopted with 583 votes to 16 and 20 abstentions.

Medicated feed

In a separate vote, MEPs also approved, by 583 votes in favour to 31 against and 6 abstentions, new rules on more responsible ways to produce, sell and use medicated feed to tackle the spread of antimicrobial resistance. More information is available [here](#).

Françoise Grossetête (EPP, FR), rapporteur, said: “This is a major step forward for public health. Beyond farmers or animal owners, the use of veterinary medicines concerns us all, because it has a direct impact on our environment and our food; in short, on our health. Thanks to this law, we will be able to reduce the consumption of antibiotics on livestock farms, an important source of resistance that is then transmitted to humans. Antibiotic resistance is a real sword of Damocles, threatening to send our health care system back to the Middle Ages.”

Next steps

The agreement still has to be formally adopted by Council before publication on the Official Journal.

Background

The European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) recently warned that bacteria in humans, food and animals continue to show resistance to the most widely-used antimicrobials. Scientists say that resistance to ciprofloxacin, an antimicrobial that is critically important for treating human infections, is very high in *Campylobacter*, thus reducing the options for effective treatment of severe foodborne infections. Multi-drug resistant *Salmonella* bacteria continue to spread across Europe.

Further information

[Adopted texts \(25.10.2018\)](#)

[Animal medicines package \(Plenary at a glance, 17-10-2018\)](#)

[Legislative observatory file
\(Veterinary medicinal products\)](#)

[Legislative observatory file \(Medicated feed\)](#)

[Rapporteur Françoise Grossetête \(EPP, FR\)](#)

[Rapporteur Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu \(S&D, RO\)](#)

Contacts

Baptiste CHATAIN

Press Officer

☎ (+32) 2 28 40992 (BXL)

☎ (+33) 3 881 74151 (STR)

📱 (+32) 498 98 13 37

🐦 [@EP_Environment](#)

✉ baptiste.chatain@europarl.europa.eu

Ján JAKUBOV

Press Officer

☎ (+32) 2 28 34476 (BXL)

☎ (+33) 3 881 73840 (STR)

📱 (+32) 498 98 35 90

🐦 [@EP_Agriculture](#)

✉ jan.jakubov@europarl.europa.eu
