

ANTIBIOTICS

Introduction

Antibiotic resistance in pets is becoming more common, and is a big challenge to Veterinary professionals, similar to human medicine. Antibiotic resistance is when the bacteria that are responsible for an infection are not affected by or killed by an antibiotic. In this case antibiotic treatment will be ineffective.

MRSA and MRSP

MRSA is methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus. These highly resistant bacteria are more commonly found in human hospitals but can infect animals.

MRSP is methicillin-resistant staphylococcus pseudintermedius. These resistant bacteria are more commonly found in animals, but may affect people.

When do we use antibiotics?

Antibiotics are used when we know, or suspect, an infection is being caused by bacteria AND the body needs help to clear that infection. Not all bacterial infections need treatment, and not all infectious diseases are caused by bacteria. Many viral infections or inflammatory conditions can cause a temperature and malaise. Don't demand antibiotics if your vet says you do not need them.

The importance of antibiotics

Antibiotics are life-saving drugs vital to treating infections and preventing disease in humans, pets and farm animals. However, with each antibiotic prescription the risk of the development of resistance increases. To keep antibiotics effective for future generations we need to take care and take action today by carefully controlling their use, only using them when necessary and with caution.

Keeping your pet healthy

First and foremost, keeping your animal as fit and well as possible will help them to fight off any bacterial infection themselves. Feed good quality food of a high nutritional value, ensure your pet is examined and vaccinated every year and has plenty of exercise. If your animal is injured or unwell seek prompt veterinary attention.

**“DO NOT USE ANTIBIOTICS
FROM PREVIOUS TREATMENTS OR
FROM FRIENDS’ PETS”**

Home treatment

We strongly advise against re-using antibiotics from previous prescriptions, other pets in the household or friends and neighbours. They may not be appropriate for the current problem or could be out-of-date, incorrectly stored, contaminated or at worst toxic in certain conditions or species. Never, ever, give your pet human medications as they could be dangerous or ineffective.

Diagnostic Testing

It is increasingly common that, in order to ensure the most appropriate treatment is used for your pet and to protect antibiotics, your vet will carry out testing on suspected infections. This can include cytology (looking at a sample under the microscope) or culture and sensitivity testing (growing the bacteria and testing what antibiotics it is sensitive or resistant to).

**“ALWAYS COMPLETE THE
COURSE OF ANTIBIOTICS
PRESCRIBED FOR YOUR PET”**

Following the instructions

It is extremely important that, if you are prescribed a course of antibiotics for your pet, that you follow the treatment course and give all the medication recommended. Giving antibiotics at the wrong time, missing doses, or not completing the course will allow the bacteria to discover new ways of becoming resistant to the antibiotic.

Other types of treatment

Sometimes your vet will prescribe other types of treatment which may include topical antibacterial cleaners (such as for ear and skin disease), salt water bathing, shampoos, etc. These may also be used alongside antibiotic courses. They are important products used to clear debris which can harbour bacteria, help to break down the bacterial wall and/or aid the body to fight off the infection by itself.

Re-checks

Treatment of infections should be monitored with follow-up appointments to ensure that the condition has responded to therapy. Even if you pet seems normal, examination and testing may be required to ensure no further medication is required. An infection that is not quite fully treated is at risk of becoming resistant.

Hygiene

One of the most common way of spreading germs, even harmless ones, is via your hands. These may be harmless bacteria, but can also include MRSA and MRSP. Hand washing is an effective way to reduce this transmission, and you do not need to use special antibacterial soaps or gels.

Ask for advice

If you are worried about your pet, their medication or antibiotic resistance in general, please speak to your vet. They will be able to inform and advise you about the latest guidelines for our animal patients and the practice protocols on antibiotic use. Please be very cautious going to the internet for advice as there is a lot of misinformation out there!

