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## **Increasing awareness of appropriate use of antibiotics in Australia: health and agriculture join together for Antibiotic Awareness Week**

World Antibiotic Awareness Week (16-22 November 2015) aims to increase awareness of the growing problem of global antibiotic resistance, and encourage best practice across the health, veterinary and agriculture sectors in using antibiotics responsibly.

This week Australian experts in human and animal health will once again join forces to act against the escalating issue of antibiotic resistance. Adopting the World Health Organization's theme "Antibiotics: handle with care", Antibiotic Awareness Week in Australia encourages everyone to play a part in preventing and containing this problem.

With increasingly serious warnings of the threat to human health from antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a global action plan to tackle the growing problem was endorsed at the sixty-eighth World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland in May 2015. In June 2015, Minister for Health Sussan Ley and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce jointly launched Australia's first *National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-19*, an important step forward for joint action across the healthcare, agriculture and veterinary sectors.

Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley said, "AMR is a global public health issue and continues to be a major threat to human health. The challenge of AMR is complex and Australia's response recognises the need for actions across all sectors where antimicrobials are used in order to achieve effective, sustainable strategies."

Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp said, "AMR continues to present a serious challenge across the medical, veterinary, food and agricultural sectors. Achieving optimal health outcomes for people and animals requires cooperation and an integrated approach in the human health, veterinary health and environmental health communities."

Antibiotic Awareness Week in Australia is a collaborative effort by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission), the Australian Government Department of Health and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, NPS MedicineWise, state and territory health departments and the Australian Veterinary Association.

The Commission's Chair, Professor Villis Marshall said, "Misuse of antibiotics is a significant contributor to AMR. The Commission promotes appropriate antibiotic treatment, through patients receiving the right antibiotic for their condition, the right dose, at the right time and for the right length of time."

Professor Marshall added that the Commission's work to establish the Antimicrobial Use and Resistance in Australia Surveillance System (AURA) will be a powerful mechanism to provide information and data to inform and enhance antimicrobial stewardship, which aims to improve the quality and safety of use of antimicrobials.

President of the Australian Veterinary Association, Dr Robert Johnson added, “Antibiotics are a precious resource that we all use – from pets to pigs to people. We all need to take responsibility for this, and work together to preserve our lifesaving medicines for as long as possible.”

Dr Lynn Weekes, CEO NPS MedicineWise says, “We all need to take individual action to handle antibiotics with care. We can’t afford to be complacent about the very real and immediate issue of antibiotic resistance. This Antibiotic Awareness Week, NPS MedicineWise is reminding everyone that the first step to improve this serious situation is to not demand or use antibiotics when they aren’t needed, or they may not work for you when you do need them in the future.”

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**The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care** - The Commission leads and coordinates improvements in safety and quality in health care across Australia. This includes developing national standards, providing advice about best practice, coordinating work in specific areas to improve outcomes for patients, and providing information, publications and resources for healthcare teams, healthcare providers, organisations and policy makers. One of the priority areas for the Commission has been in preventing infections and reducing antimicrobial resistance. For more information visit [www.safetyandquality.gov.au](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au).

**NPS MedicineWise** - Independent, evidence-based and not-for-profit, NPS MedicineWise enables better decisions about medicines and medical tests. NPS MedicineWise is part way through a 5 year campaign to reduce inappropriate use of antibiotics. We receive funding from the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au) for more information.

**The Australian Veterinary Association** - The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the only national association representing veterinarians in Australia. Founded in 1921, the AVA today represents 8,500 members working in all areas of animal science, health and welfare.