

IFAH addresses benefits and risks of antimicrobials

Renews call for regulation based on scientific risk analysis

12 October 2011 – Cape Town – At the World Veterinary Congress in South Africa yesterday, the International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH) directly addressed the responsible use of antibiotics and renewed its call for a regulatory system based on risk analysis and science.

IFAH Executive Director Barbara Freischem, delivering a presentation at the conference entitled *Benefits, Risks and Challenges related to the use of Antibiotics*, said:

“It is a challenge that 25% of livestock production losses are due to disease in animals. Antibiotics are necessary tools to ensure animals and people remain healthy, but they also contribute to the more efficient use of resources by food-producing animals.

As with all medical practices, there are risks involved. A commonly cited example is the risk of treatment failure in both animals and humans through development of antimicrobial resistance. However, this risk must be put in context. Not all resistances, bacteria or antibiotics are the same. Similarly, there are many different mechanisms of resistance in animals and bacteria; different modes of resistance dissemination; different types of resistance against different types of antibiotics and even the host can influence bacterial behaviour in myriad ways. The list goes on, but it illustrates the need for dedicated and sustained analysis to properly gauge risk and allow for informed decision making.

The challenge, therefore, is to have systems in place which ensure regulation is based on risk analysis and science. Veterinarians have a key role to play in the responsible administration of Antibiotics. In addition to a close monitoring of quantities, vigilant surveillance of resistance development in pathogens and food-borne bacteria is needed, and research and development of new veterinary antibiotics must be encouraged to meet current and future health needs.

These challenges require a holistic approach. Veterinarians cannot work in isolation, and we all must work together to ensure an efficient, effective regulatory system to address this One Health issue.”

Notes for editors

IFAH

The International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH) is an organisation representing manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in both developed and developing countries across five continents. The mission of IFAH is to foster a greater understanding of animal health matters and promote a predictable, science-based regulatory environment that facilitates the supply of innovative and quality animal medicines, vaccines and other animal health products into a competitive market place. These products contribute to a healthy and safe food supply as well as a high standard of health and welfare for animals and people.

For further information on IFAH, please visit www.ifahsec.org