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# Antimicrobial Resistance Direction Statement for Animals and Plants

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## Introduction

Antimicrobial agents are important tools in the management of infections in humans, animals and plants. Without them, human health, agricultural production and animal health outcomes (including companion animals), would be significantly compromised.

Antimicrobial resistance<sup>1</sup> (AMR) bacteria that have a greater potential to infect and cause illness in humans is generating world-wide concern, and there are a number of global initiatives currently underway to understand the epidemiology of human AMR. In parallel, there are global concerns that as AMR increases in animals and plants antimicrobials will become less effective for both therapeutic and prophylactic use. Use of antimicrobials in animals and plants may also contribute to AMR in humans.

The Ministry for Primary Industries considers this an important issue and has developed this Direction Statement to outline its vision, goals and objectives for primary sectors and other stakeholders. This will underpin and set the direction for its work programme in this area.

## Global concern

The global concern about antimicrobial resistance has led to the development of a “One Health” approach on management of antimicrobial resistance. Internationally, a number of organisations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), have incorporated this approach. WHO has developed a draft global action plan and the CAC, via an *ad hoc* Task Force, has developed guidance on risk assessment for antimicrobials used in human and veterinary medicine. OIE has developed guidelines on use of antimicrobials in animals. Also, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has significantly increased its focus on antimicrobial resistance over the last few years. In association with these activities, a number of countries have developed national strategies on AMR.

The intent of all these activities is to minimise and/or slow resistance to antimicrobials. Actions in countries overseas have included banning the use of certain antimicrobials that are important for human use,

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<sup>1</sup> Antimicrobial resistance means microorganisms that cause infections or diseases in humans, animals and plants become resistant to antimicrobial agents that they were previously sensitive to, in such a way that infections or diseases become more difficult or impossible to treat. In this context, ‘antimicrobial’ is a general term for drugs, chemicals, or other substances that either kill or slow the growth of microbes. Substances that are considered antimicrobials include surface disinfectants, antibiotics, parasiticides, anti-fungal and anti-viral agents.

restrictions on prophylactic use in production animals in some countries, and global efforts to increase surveillance and monitoring. Other endeavours include promoting research to understand better mechanisms of resistance and interlinkages between animals and humans, industry and public awareness activities, and developing new antimicrobials with novel modes of action to enter the market.

## **New Zealand**

The prevalence of AMR in New Zealand is still relatively low. New Zealand is one of the three lowest users of antibiotics to treat animals in the OECD. This is likely due to strong regulatory controls on use of antimicrobial agents, relatively low-intensity animal husbandry systems, and continuing investment by Government and industry in antimicrobial resistance initiatives. However, it is important that both Government and industry continue to take a pro-active approach to minimise the development of antimicrobial resistance in animals and plants.

While individual New Zealand Government agencies and industry sectors have work programmes to address antimicrobial resistance from their individual areas of responsibility (such as the Ministry of Health for human health), there is a need for greater formal direction in this area and better coordination across Government agencies and industry.

## **Vision**

New Zealand has a pro-active and scientifically based regulatory system to minimise the risk of AMR in animals, plants and food.

## **Goal**

Effective antimicrobials are available for responsible use in animals and plants, and any antimicrobial resistance has minimal impact on animal, plant or human health.

## **Scope**

Antimicrobials: those agents used in managing animal and plant health that have the potential for AMR to negatively impact on animal, plant or human health.

## **Objectives**

- Establish and maintain robust science and risk assessment platform for regulatory decisions regarding AMR for animals and plants that is in line with best international practice.
- Maintain and continue to enhance New Zealand's regulatory system for antimicrobials used for animals and plants, which is in line with best international practice and is tailored to New Zealand's agricultural and public health needs.
- Remain abreast of national and international developments and approaches toward AMR, particularly as they impact the New Zealand context.
- Ensure antimicrobials are used in a prudent and responsible manner and facilitate other intervention tools to reduce the use of antimicrobials.
- Liaise with other Government agencies, industry and other stakeholders to ensure AMR work programmes remain aligned and complementary, as much as practical.
- Facilitate awareness and understanding of AMR and communicate effectively with all stakeholders, general public and media.