



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
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Press release

European countries increase commitment to responsible antibiotic use in animals

A report published by EMA shows that European countries continue to reduce the use of antibiotics in animals. The overall sales of veterinary antibiotics across Europe dropped by more than 32% between 2011 and 2017.

In particular, two of the critically important classes of antibiotics for human medicine were used less in animals: sales of polymyxins plummeted by 66% and sales of 3rd- and 4th-generation cephalosporins decreased by more than 20%. These classes include antibiotics used to treat serious infections in humans caused by bacteria resistant to most treatments.

The findings of the report confirm the downward trend seen over the last few years and show that EU guidance and national campaigns promoting prudent use of antibiotics in animals to fight antimicrobial resistance are having a positive effect.

The report, part of the [European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobial Consumption \(ESVAC\)](#) project, presents data from 31 countries from the European Economic Area and Switzerland which voluntarily provided information on sales or prescriptions of veterinary antibiotics for 2017. Participation in the ESVAC project has grown substantially, from nine countries in 2010 to 31 countries in 2019. This shows a clear commitment of European countries to promote responsible use of antibiotics in animals, which ultimately lowers the risk of bacteria in food of animal origin becoming resistant.

The ESVAC report also shows that the situation is not the same across Europe. While 19 of the 25 countries that provided data for 2011-2017 saw a drop in sales of veterinary antibiotics of more than 5%, three countries recorded an increase of more than 5% in sales during the same period. The remaining three countries did not register a significant change in sales. The substantial decline in the sales of antimicrobials for food-producing species seen for some countries indicates that there is still a high potential for a decrease of antimicrobial use in others, especially in those with a high consumption.

Reduction in sales is the result of combined efforts of veterinarians, farmers, other actors in the livestock sector, EU Member States, the European Commission and EMA. National campaigns for



prudent use of antibiotics in animals, sales targets and restriction of use of some antimicrobials in food-producing animals, as well as EU guidance are among the actions implemented to reduce the sales of veterinary antimicrobials across Europe. These efforts fall under the umbrella of the [EU One Health Action Plan](#) against Antimicrobial Resistance. Led by the European Commission, the main goal of this plan is to preserve the possibility of effective treatment of infections in humans and animals through a framework for continued, more extensive action to reduce the emergence and spread of AMR.

The ESVAC project was launched by EMA in April 2010 following a request from the European Commission to develop a harmonised approach to the collection and reporting of data from EU Member States on the use of antimicrobials in animals. The ESVAC report is published every year and is used by risk assessors and risk managers in Member States as a reference for antimicrobial policies and for guidance on responsible use of antimicrobials. All data contained in the report are accessible in the [ESVAC interactive database](#).

Notes

1. This press release, together with all related documents, is available on the Agency's website.
2. More information on the work of the European Medicines Agency can be found on its website: www.ema.europa.eu

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