

AAAP Guidelines for Judicious Therapeutic Use of Antimicrobials in Poultry

The American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP) is a professional organization of poultry veterinarians and scientists responsible for the health and well-being of commercial poultry and the protection of public health. The AAAP fully supports antimicrobial stewardship efforts and promotes the responsible use of antimicrobial in food-producing animals.

Antimicrobial stewardship refers to the actions poultry veterinarians take individually and as a profession to safeguard poultry, public, and environmental health while preserving the effectiveness and availability of antimicrobial drugs through conscientious oversight and responsible, evidence-based medical decision-making.

The AAAP recognizes that antimicrobials remain necessary to treat, prevent, and control infectious diseases in poultry, and emphasizes that preventive health programs can reduce the occurrence of disease and, therefore, the need for antimicrobial therapy. When the decision is reached to use antimicrobials, veterinarians should strive to optimize efficacy and minimize resistance to antimicrobials to protect animal, public and environmental health.

The following principles have been and will continue to be used to develop antimicrobial stewardship plans by poultry veterinarians:

1. Commit to stewardship

- Engage all poultry veterinarians and relevant stakeholders in the stewardship effort.
- Develop organizational stewardship plans that incorporate commitment, training, and accountability for disease prevention, control, and treatment while optimizing the prescribing, administration, and oversight of antimicrobial drugs.
- Identify high-priority bacterial diseases that are commonly treated with antimicrobial drugs on which to focus stewardship efforts.
- Establish and follow all requirements of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR).
- Maintain accurate antimicrobial treatment records.
- Demonstrate commitment to systematically assessing the outcomes of antimicrobial drug therapy.

2. Advocate for a system of care that focuses on reducing the need to use antimicrobials

- Promote improvements in the areas of farm management, biosecurity and vaccination strategies.
- Work with farmers, allied partners, and stakeholders to adopt preventive and management strategies which reduce the introduction and spread of poultry disease and reduce stress in poultry populations. These strategies include vaccination, biosecurity, and poultry husbandry and environmental management programs.
- Provide alternative strategies to antimicrobial drugs in the prevention, control and treatment of poultry diseases to optimize outcomes in health, welfare and food safety.

3. Select and use antimicrobial drugs judiciously

- Use an evidence-based approach for making a diagnosis and determining whether an antimicrobial drug is indicated.

- Make an informed selection of an appropriate antimicrobial therapy based on clinical signs, history, epidemiological evidence, and laboratory diagnostics such as culture and susceptibility of bacterial pathogens.
- Follow regulatory guidelines, including FDA-CVM GFI #209, #213 and the modernization of the VFD process that outline directions for water-soluble and feed additive administration of antimicrobials in food animals.
- In instances when extra-label drug use (ELDU) is warranted, obtain a scientifically based recommendation from a source like Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) to prevent violative residues.
- Ensure proper handling of antimicrobials.
- Continually assess and record outcomes of antimicrobial use.

4. Evaluate antimicrobial drug use practices

- Continually evaluate antimicrobial decision-making practices by the poultry veterinarian.
- Support analyzing and sharing of antimicrobial drug use data to ensure collaboration between poultry industry, academics and government to monitor current practices and drive for innovation in this area.

5. Educate and build expertise

- Make resources available and encourage the development of expertise in antimicrobial stewardship.
- Provide continuing education opportunities for poultry veterinarians related to antimicrobial use and alternatives.
- Continue to educate stakeholders on management, biosecurity, and production practices to ensure poultry health, welfare and food safety.
- Continue to evaluate our judicious use and stewardship guidelines in the face of new practices and innovations.
- Support research on antimicrobial drug use and resistance. Advocate for the development and approval of antimicrobial and alternative therapies not used in human medicine.