

Increasing resistance levels are driven by antibiotic use in all sectors: in humans in the community and in hospitals, on farms and in companion animals. Although resistance in human infections is mainly caused by human antibiotic use, for a range of bacteria, farm-animal use contributes significantly and for some infections is the main source of resistance. Whilst some countries are taking urgent action to dramatically reduce farm antibiotic use, others continue to avoid tackling the irresponsible use of these precious medicines. In 2014 the Alliance to Save our Antibiotics, Medact and the Royal Society of Medicine brought together experts from across Europe to discuss ways to avert this catastrophic threat to human health.

“It is interesting that in contrast to the veterinary sector and the agricultural sector, we in the medical sector are trying very, very hard to limit our use of antibiotics”

Mr Babul Sethia, President, Royal Society of Medicine



THE 2014 CONFERENCE, BRINGING TOGETHER EXPERTS FROM ACROSS EUROPE, WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE A TEAM FOUNDATION.

The Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics is an alliance of health, medical, environmental and animal welfare groups working to stop the over-use of antibiotics in animal farming. It was founded by Compassion in World Farming, the Soil Association and Sustain in 2009 and is supported by the Jeremy Coller Foundation. Its vision is a world in which human and animal health and well-being are protected by food and farming systems that do not rely routinely on antibiotics and related drugs.

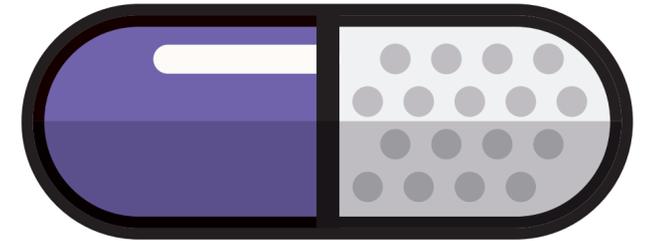
Contact the Alliance:
emma.slawinski@ciwf.org.uk
+44 (0) 1483 521950



THE ALLIANCE TO SAVE OUR ANTIBIOTICS IS KINDLY SUPPORTED BY THE JEREMY COLLER FOUNDATION.

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AND AGRICULTURE

STEPPING BACK FROM THE BRINK



“It doesn’t really matter if we have a good policy in Denmark, if you have a poor policy in the UK it could also affect us... Usage in one country can affect resistance in another country.”

Jogen Schlundt, Director, National Food Institute, Technical University, Denmark

Denmark has banned the routine prophylactic use of antibiotics and limited the profit that vets can make from prescribing. This action was based on a sophisticated monitoring and surveillance system. The use of critically important antibiotics has also been heavily restricted. Denmark introduced a “yellow-card” system for pig farmers in 2010. Farmers with high usage, and their vets, can be sanctioned if reductions are not achieved.

DENMARK

“The Government said: 20% reduction in 2011, 50% by 2013 and 70% by 2015. Looking back, it was helpful to have goals.”

Hetty van Beers-Schreurs, Director, The Netherlands Veterinary Medicines Authority

The Dutch Government gathered together farming industry leaders and veterinarians to work on solutions to the overuse of antibiotics in agriculture. This includes the development of transparent monitoring, down to farm level; reduction targets, a ban on routine preventative use, and the formulation of an independent organisation to set benchmarks for acceptable and excessive levels of use. In addition, a system similar to the Danish yellow-card system allows immediate action to be taken on vets and farms that are using excessive amounts of antibiotics.



THE NETHERLANDS

“It goes without saying that animal husbandry and agricultural practices should be conducted in a manner that doesn’t endanger human health. We need to move away from any routine use of antibiotics that masks poor animal husbandry. No individual, animal or human, should receive unnecessary antibiotics.”

Antibiotic [resistant] bacteria know no borders... In order to achieve progress in this global task we must all co-operate and contribute. We are all responsible; Doctors, Veterinarians, Farmers, Consumers and Policy Makers. You and Me.”

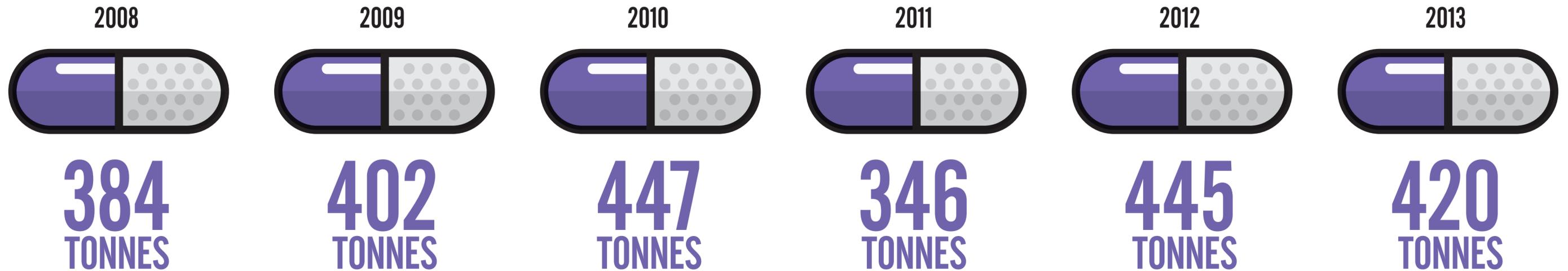
Pernilla Ivarsson, Deputy Director General at the Ministry for Rural Affairs, Sweden

SWEDEN

Sweden has amongst the lowest antibiotic use in animals in the European Union. They banned the routine use of antibiotics in the 1980s and have reduced their use of group treatments with antibiotics by 97% since then.

FACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UK TOTAL VETERINARY ANTIBIOTIC USE (TONNES OF ACTIVE INGREDIENT)



Farm use of critically important antibiotics is rising while medical use is reducing.



Animals account for about 45% of antibiotic use in the UK.



There are already concerns that antibiotic resistant E.coli from farm animals are contributing to the 5000 deaths a year in England alone from resistant bloodstream infections.



The use of antibiotics in British pigs and poultry is now at least 3.5 times higher per unit of livestock than it is in the Netherlands and at least 4 times higher than Denmark.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:



1 A target for reducing farm antibiotic use by 50% by 2020 and by 80% by 2025.

As part of this we need specific new restrictions on the use of the critically important medical antibiotics – this must include a target to cut the use of critically important antibiotics by 80% by 2020 and 95% by 2025, to secure these vital antimicrobials for human use.



2 A ban on all preventative mass medication in feed or water, except for where disease has been diagnosed in some of the animals.

A reduction strategy should focus on good animal welfare, not routine medication, to ensure full health.



3 Annual national surveillance data on the human health impacts of antimicrobial resistance, prioritising mortality data.