

# Delivering excellence in health and welfare with responsible antibiotic use

Antibiotic free poultry production is going to be a permanent feature on the poultry industry's agenda for years to come. Yes, we can debate the origins of antimicrobial resistance but the hard fact of reality is this topic is very high on the consumer's list of concerns regarding poultry issues.

It was originally a European issue, but just a few years ago it crossed the Atlantic and became a major issue in the USA. Today, you can go to virtually any country in the world and poultry producers are seriously looking at going antibiotic-free.

## Stewardship scheme

If you look at the UK, one of 'the pioneers' of antibiotic freedom is their national producers association, the British Poultry Council. They recently published the annual report for 2017 for their Antibiotic Stewardship Scheme, which has now been operating since 2012.

It is an encapsulation of a success story and International Poultry Production have been looking at some of the key facts.

The report starts with some positive statistics for Britain – half the meat consumed in the UK in 2017 was poultry, yet that production used only 9.7% of the total UK usage of antibiotics licensed for food producing animals (compared to 21% in 2012).

Also, over the last six years, the British poultry meat sector successfully reduced its

use of antibiotics by 82% and has stopped all routine preventative treatments using antibiotics, for example of day old chicks on placement.

In addition, the use of the so called high priority antibiotics – which are the antibiotics of last resort in human medicine – are now only ever used as a drug of last resort in poultry.

This has been achieved by delivering excellence in bird health and welfare by monitoring and reviewing on-farm management practices and ensuring the responsible use of antibiotics throughout the production chain.

Antibiotic therapies are used in partnership with good management practices and never as a substitute for substandard management. They are used 'only when necessary' and then only under the direction of a veterinarian.

In this context, the use of macrolides and fluoroquinolones is permitted only after consultation with the supervising veterinarian and after alternative options have been explored.

## Mission to deliver excellence

Their mission is to deliver excellence in bird health and welfare and to ensure the responsible use of antibiotics and to safeguard their efficacy.

Since, their mission is to protect health and welfare, antibiotics will be used when they are needed.

## RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS



**39.36% REDUCTION**  
in the total use of antibiotics in the last year (2016-2017)

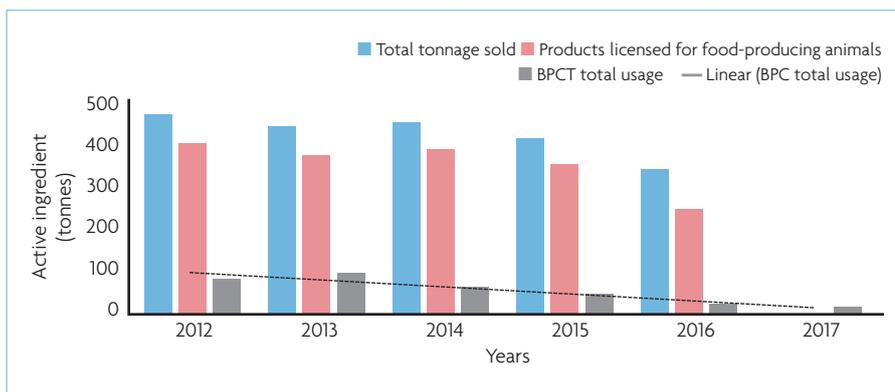


**82% REDUCTION**  
in the total use of antibiotics in the last six years (2012-2017)



**91% REDUCTION**  
in the use of Fluoroquinolones, Critically Important Antibiotic for human health (2012-2017)

Fig. 1. Tonnes of antibiotics sold or used in the UK (Source: BPC and VMD 2018).



This mission has five key cornerstones to its implementation:

- **Data collection.**

The poultry meat sector is the first UK livestock sector to pioneer a data collection mechanism and share antibiotic usage data with the Government's Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

- **Rapid on-farm diagnostics.**

Use of diagnostic and sensitivity testing tools used in human medicine to better map bird health and welfare, evaluate the impact of disease control programmes and implement robust surveillance.

- **Sharing best practice.**

To lead the way in improving the sector's understanding of its use of antibiotics and facilitate sharing of best practice on responsible use of antibiotics.

- **Understanding patterns of resistance.**

Working with the Government to contribute to the 'One Health' approach set out by the UN on Antimicrobial Resistance.

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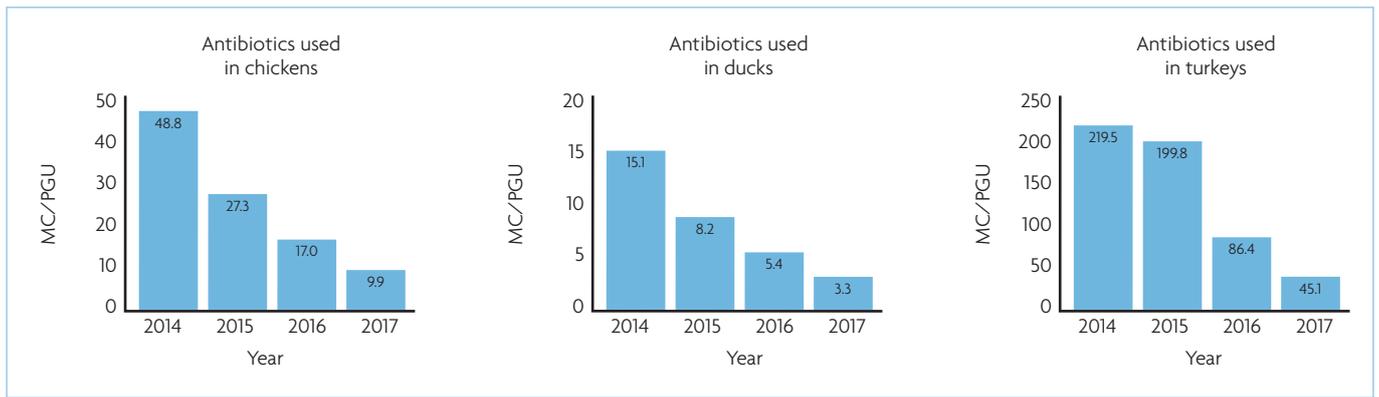


Fig. 2. Antibiotic usage in different species of birds (BPC 2018).

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● **Looking at alternative strategies.**

The British poultry meat sector is committed to keeping pace with science and innovation and exploring alternatives to antibiotics.

The British Poultry Council will keep the UK's position at the forefront of international efforts to tackle antimicrobial resistance and ensure that antibiotics are effective for future generations.

The Report cites the following comment from Dr Marc Sprenger, Director, Antimicrobial Resistance Secretariat, WHO (World Health Organisation): "The British Poultry Council has shown the world that reducing the use of medically important antimicrobials is a win-win situation. Production has increased by 10% even with the reduction in the use of antibiotics by 82%. We hope this sets an example for the global poultry industry and indeed, for other food and farming sectors."

**Frequently asked questions (FAQs)**

With the aim of debunking some of the misconceptions around antibiotic usage in the poultry meat sector, here are some FAQs:

**Do large and small farms face the same challenge of antimicrobial resistance?**

The size of the farm or the production

system has no link whatsoever with the development of resistance.

**Will reducing the use of antibiotics mean less instances of resistance?**

Reducing, refining and replacing use of antibiotics helps reduce selection as strains can occur naturally as well as through misuse of antibiotics. However, reducing antibiotic usage does not necessarily lessen resistance. Bacteria resistant to some antibiotics used in human health have been found on farms that have never used that antibiotic.

**Are antibiotic residues found in the chicken we eat?**

No. When we eat chicken, we are not eating the antibiotics that the bird may have been given. There are strict regulations governing the withdrawal period (how much time passes between when an animal is last treated with antibiotics and when it leaves the farm) that ensures that there are no residues in the meat.

**Are antibiotics used for growth promotion?**

No. The use of antibiotics for growth promotion has been banned across the EU since 2006.

**Why treat whole flocks?**

Oral treatment of flocks under veterinary supervision is the most effective and practical method of treatment. ■

### USE OF ANTIBIOTIC CLASSES

**91% REDUCTION**  
in the use of  
(CIA) Fluoroquinolones

**76% REDUCTION**  
in the use of  
(CIA) Macrolides

**60% REDUCTION**  
in the use of  
Amoxicillin

**93% REDUCTION**  
in the use of  
Tetracyclines

Fig. 3. Use of antibiotic classes by active ingredient in 2017.

