

## **WHO tables New Zealand's antimicrobial resistance plan**

By Mark Ross

With the increasing focus on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) globally, the New Zealand action plan, developed by a group of New Zealand experts, was submitted at the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s world assembly on May 22.

The cross-agency plan was developed by the Antimicrobial Resistance Action Planning Group to minimise incidences of antimicrobial resistance across New Zealand. The group comprises of human and animal health experts - including Agcarm, the Ministry for Primary Industries and the New Zealand Veterinary Association.

Under the directive of the WHO, the action plan focusses on five objectives for managing resistance. They include improving awareness, conducting research and surveillance, preventing infections, optimising the use of medicines and ensuring a sustainable approach to countering AMR.

New Zealand needs to invest in AMR to implement the plan. Although antibiotic use in production animals is estimated to be the third lowest in the world, agriculture must still play its part in decreasing resistance. This means ensuring that the most appropriate therapy is used in every case, antimicrobial agents are used according to instructions, and that industry and government continue to work together.

Addressing the way people use antibiotics is of paramount importance. Over-use and inappropriate use by people is the main cause of resistance - as evidenced in several reports. The European Medicines Agency and the UK department of Health, state that: "...*clinical issues with antimicrobial resistance that we face in human medicine are primarily the result of antibiotic use in people, rather than the use of antibiotics in animals*". The US Centre for Disease Control found that out of 18 species of antibiotic resistant bacteria that pose the greatest threat to human health, only two have their potential source in agriculture.

Animal medicine producers and their national, regional and global associations have contributed to the responsible use of antimicrobials for over two decades - resulting in numerous actions to minimise resistance. Examples include researching and developing new solutions to infectious diseases, and developing prudent use guidelines.

Access to effective antimicrobial agents is vital for the health of people and animals, as well as food security and food safety. But we must use them responsibly and to label directions.

- Mark Ross is chief executive of Agcarm, the industry association for companies which manufacture and distribute crop protection and animal health products.

### **Notes to editor:**

Antimicrobial agents are medicines used to treat infections caused by bacteria in particular. They are essential to both human and animal health, but in recent years some bacteria have demonstrated full and partial resistance to various antimicrobial agents. This occurrence called antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is raising concerns for both public and animal health.

Under the directive of the WHO, the action plan focusses on five strategic objectives:

1. Improving awareness and understanding of AMR through effective communication, education and training.

2. Strengthening the knowledge and evidence base about AMR through research and surveillance.
3. Improving infection prevention and control measures across human health and animal care settings to help prevent infections, the spread of resistance and transmission of microorganisms.
4. Optimising the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health, including ensuring that regulation of animal and plant antimicrobials is maintained and enhanced.
5. Establishing and supporting clear governance, collaboration and investment arrangements to ensure a sustainable approach to countering AMR.