

Accelerating action against antimicrobial resistance: closing the gaps in the animal health sector

This document is intended to inform all stakeholders involved in the preparatory discussions for the **High-Level Meeting (HLM) on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2024**. It outlines WOA's perspective on the current gaps in addressing AMR and highlights four priority issues central to the international dialogue from an animal health perspective: **cross-sectoral coordination, resourced surveillance systems, prevention, and sustainable financing**.

The issue of antimicrobial resistance will be addressed for the second time since 2016 during a High-Level Meeting on the sidelines of the upcoming UNGA. WOA is participating in the discussions alongside its Quadripartite partners (FAO, UNEP and WHO). Our aim is to support the development of an action-oriented declaration to mobilise political will and efforts at the national, regional and global level to address the root causes and challenges of AMR.

Antimicrobials are critical medicines whose effectiveness must be preserved for the treatment, control and, where appropriate, for the prevention of infectious diseases in animals, humans and plants. Therefore, the animal health sector has to be adequately supported to help accelerate the response to this growing threat. What is needed and why?

The animal health sector: a key player in the fight against antimicrobial resistance



One Health

Humans, animals, plants and the environment are connected and interdependent. Pathogens that are resistant to antimicrobials can be transmitted between animals, humans, plants and the environment through direct contact, consumption of contaminated food, or the environment. **Tackling AMR⁴ requires a cross-sectoral collaborative effort that must integrate the expertise of animal health professionals.**



Shared antimicrobials

Many antimicrobials used in veterinary medicine are also used in human medicine and plants. Their misuse and overuse across sectors can lead to the emergence of resistant pathogens, thus making diseases more difficult to treat with available molecules. **The responsible use of antimicrobials in animals is key in contributing to the global effort to curb AMR.**



Food security

Farmed animals contribute to secure local and global economies, enabling access to nutritious and safe food, essential for human health. **Effective antimicrobials are critical to ensure animal health and thus the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), such as good health and well-being, responsible consumption and production, as well as zero hunger.**



Environment

The inappropriate use of antimicrobials in animals can lead to the release of antimicrobial residues and resistant pathogens into the terrestrial and aquatic environments, contributing to the spread of AMR. **Effective management of animal waste and safe disposal of unused veterinary medicinal products on farms is key to preventing the emergence and spread of drug-resistant pathogens in the environment.**

How can we better tackle AMR? Four priorities for the animal health sector

Cross-sectoral coordination

The animal health sector needs to be fully integrated into national AMR strategies.

- More than 90% of countries had developed National Action Plans on AMR, but only half of them have an effective multisectoral coordination mechanism in place to guide and oversee the implementation phase¹.
- Lack of coordination between the animal, human and environmental sectors leads to isolated and less effective initiatives to tackle AMR.

Member States must implement multi-sectoral National Action Plans on AMR, clearly identifying and funding priority needs for every sector, including animal health, ensuring the establishment of efficient cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms.

Prevention

Preventative measures must be prioritised, starting by strengthening research, development and implementation of innovative tools in animal health.

- Animal health investments represented only 7% of total funding in AMR research and development (R&D) from 2017 to 2024².
- 6 cents for every 10 USD were allocated to R&D in animal health vaccines from 2017 to 2024².
- Investments in animal health vaccines have decreased by 59% since 2018².

The availability of innovative animal disease prevention tools must be enhanced, including access to high-quality vaccines. By 2030, all countries should have defined animal vaccination strategies with a funded implementation plan, according to [WOAH's list of priority diseases for which vaccines could reduce antimicrobial use](#). This should be complemented with effective implementation of biosecurity measures, good animal husbandry practices and the development of alternatives to antimicrobials.

Resourced surveillance

National surveillance systems must be strengthened and institutionalised to support informed decision-making.

- One out of three countries do not use relevant data on antimicrobial consumption to inform decision making and guide policy development across sectors¹. This figure increases to two out of three countries in the aquatic animal health sector.
- Less than half of WOAHA Members (42%) have an integrated multisectoral surveillance system for AMR and antimicrobial use (AMU)³.
- Almost 25% of WOAHA Members do not have an animal AMR surveillance system in place³.

Surveillance systems on AMR and AMU need to be sustainably resourced and upgraded at the national level. Data should be shared across sectors to support decision making under a One Health approach. Moreover, national surveillance systems should enable the reporting of consistent information over time to global monitoring platforms, such as [ANIMUSE](#), [InFARM](#) and [GLASS](#).

Adequate funding

AMR initiatives involving the animal health sector must be better resourced.

- In 2023, only 25% of countries had costed and budgeted the activities of their National Action Plans on AMR and had an effective monitoring system in place¹.

Existing and new funding mechanisms must be strategically adapted to the needs of the different health sectors, ensuring that they are proportionate to the actions planned, regardless of the specific sector involved. This means that sustainable and predictable sources of funding need to be established at national and global levels to support the implementation of cost-effective interventions in all sectors, based on evidence provided by surveillance programmes.

WOAH'S CALL TO ACTION

The animal health sector plays a pivotal role in the global efforts to curb AMR by promoting a more responsible use of antimicrobials. **Members are called upon to provide sustainable and predictable funding sources for their National Action Plans.** This will enable the implementation of cost-effective interventions across various sectors, guided by robust surveillance programs.

We must **prioritise preventive measures**, starting with **addressing the severely underfunded R&D pipeline for animal vaccines**. Only by accelerating our global response to the growing threat of AMR can we prevent a return to the pre-antimicrobial era and its consequences. We all have a role to play in enhancing animal health systems, everyone's health is at stake.

¹ TrACSS, 2023

² AMR R&D Hub: A global partnership currently consisting of 17 countries, the European Commission and two philanthropic foundations, launched in May 2018 following a call from G20 leaders

³ TrACSS, 2021