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WOAH REPORT SHOWS AN INCREASE IN ANTIBIOTIC USE IN FARM ANIMALS

The widespread use of antimicrobial agents in farm animals increased by 2% from 2019 to 2021, according to a report published by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). This increase follows a consistent decline in previous years. The data was obtained through the analysis of antibiotic sales and import figures.

Antibiotic use in animals rose from 107.3 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) in 2019 to 107.9 mg/kg in 2021. Tetracyclines were the most used antibiotic (35.6%). The species that received the most antibiotic therapy were cattle (41%), followed by pigs (21%), poultry (18%), and aquatic species (9%).

Antibiotic use in the agro-food industry recorded declines in America (-9%), Europe (-6%), and Asia and the Pacific (-0.7%), while Africa saw an increase of 179%, attributed to more efficient reporting by some African countries.

WOAH has been monitoring the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals since 2015,

as part of its efforts to limit the emergence of multidrug-resistant bacteria.

The excessive use of medically relevant antimicrobials in farm animals is considered one of the factors contributing to the increasing rates of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Moreover, 20% of WOA member states reported the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters, a practice discouraged by WOA and other global health agencies.

11% of member states reported using agents such as colistin in the growth acceleration process. Colistin is classified as one of the highest priority critically important antimicrobials in human medicine.

The Director-General of WOA has urged the organization's members to restrict the use of antibiotics solely for medical-veterinary purposes and to intensify efforts with all parties to achieve a total ban on the use of antibiotics as growth promoters, especially those vital to human health.

The excessive use of antibiotics, along with inadequate hygiene in the agro-food industry and food farms, represents a primary step in generating multiple potential infections with multidrug-resistant microorganisms in human medicine.

Adapted after Chris Dall, MA, 07 May 2024



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