

ANTIMICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP

DEFINITION

Antimicrobial stewardship refers to the actions veterinarians take to preserve the success and availability of antimicrobial drugs through careful oversight and responsible medical decision-making while protecting animal, public, and environmental health.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Antimicrobial stewardship maintains animal health and welfare by using several strategies to prevent common diseases; using an evidence-based approach in judging the use of antimicrobial drugs; and then using antimicrobials wisely, cautiously, and with frequent evaluation of therapy results, respecting the client's available resources.

The following principles can be used to create antimicrobial stewardship plans in any veterinary practice setting. Use these principles to improve disease prevention strategies and antimicrobial drug prescribing, evaluate outcomes, and adjust plans accordingly.



Commit to stewardship

Involve practice members and stakeholders in the stewardship effort. Create stewardship plans for disease prevention and to improve the usage and supervision of antimicrobial drugs. Focus on high-priority conditions commonly treated with antimicrobial drugs. Commit to thoroughly evaluating the results of antimicrobial drug therapy. Identify individuals to lead the stewardship plan and deliver accountability.



Advocate for care systems to prevent common diseases

Recognize barriers to successful disease prevention. Work with clients to find strategies that minimize the need for antimicrobial drugs. Such strategies include animal husbandry and hygiene, biosecurity and infection control, nutrition, and vaccination programs. Consider options other than antimicrobial drugs.



Select and use antimicrobial drugs sensibly

Recognize barriers to proper antimicrobial prescribing and usage. Use an evidence-based approach for making a diagnosis and deciding if an antimicrobial drug is specified. Make an informed selection of a suitable antimicrobial drug and regimen. Refer to applicable veterinary medical guidelines for sensible therapeutic use. Evaluate results of antimicrobial use.



Evaluate antimicrobial drug practices

Urge the creation of a program for the assessment of antimicrobial drug use at the veterinary practice or aggregated levels. Confirm that feedback is given. Support examining and sharing of antimicrobial drug use data while keeping veterinarian-client privacy. Involve clients in finding barriers to application of stewardship programs and to assess antimicrobial storage, usage, and other practices.



Educate and build expertise

Offer resources to support the development of expertise in antimicrobial stewardship. Stay up-to-date on disease prevention strategies, antimicrobial alternatives, and choice of antimicrobial drugs. Critically evaluate and execute relevant clinical guidelines for antimicrobial use. Deliver client education on antimicrobial stewardship. Research antimicrobial drug use and resistance.