

Antibiotic Awareness Week 13 – 19/11/2017

Fact Sheet

Antibiotic Awareness Week

Antibiotic resistance is growing worldwide; this increases the risk that infectious diseases will become difficult or impossible to treat, leading to the deaths of people or animals. The international Antibiotic Awareness Week (AAW) – launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) – is intended to highlight the issue and bring it to the awareness of a broad public. Switzerland is also playing its part: during the national Antibiotic Awareness Week (13 - 19 November 2017), the topic of antibiotic resistance will be the focus of discussion and information campaigns in collaboration with participants from medicine, veterinary medicine, agriculture and the environmental sector. A variety of events and publications are planned right across Switzerland. The week will be coordinated by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO), the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) and the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN). Universities, experts, sector organisations, associations, research centres, health institutions, pharmacists, consumer associations and other interested parties are invited to participate in Antibiotic Awareness Week with their own events and initiatives. 19 events and initiatives are already planned, such as doctors' symposia or lectures for laypersons.

Antibiotic Resistance

The development of antibiotics was one of the most significant advances ever made in medicine. These medicines make it possible to treat dangerous medical conditions, such as pneumonia or blood poisoning, which often proved fatal in the past. However, the excessive and sometimes improper use of antibiotics has resulted in more and more bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics.

The consequences are dramatic and affect humans, animals, agriculture and the environment in equal measure. People and animals are already dying every year in Switzerland due to bacterial infections which can no longer be successfully treated by antibiotics. In order to tackle the problem of increasing resistance, joint and coordinated action is needed. One of the important measures in the National Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance (StAR), agreed by the Federal Council in 2015, is to inform professionals and the broader public.



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Bundesamt für Gesundheit BAG

**Bundesamt für Lebensmittelsicherheit und
Veterinärwesen BLV**

Bundesamt für Landwirtschaft BLW

Bundesamt für Umwelt BAFU

Strategy on Antibiotic Resistance (StAR)

The strategy is being implemented in stages: two thirds of the 35 planned measures have already been initiated. Research is playing an important role: the launch of the National Research Programme “Antimicrobial Resistance” (NRP72) will enable gaps in knowledge to be closed and support to be provided for the implementation of the strategy. Since the issue of antibiotic resistance affects many areas, the four Federal Offices FOPH, FSVO, FOAG and FOEN are working together on StAR with a “One Health” approach (for further information, see www.star.admin.ch). The strategy consists of eight fields of activity: monitoring, prevention, appropriate use of antibiotics, resistance control, research and development, co-operation, information and education, and general conditions.

What does the public know?

A preliminary survey among the Swiss population on the topic of antibiotics and the problem of antibiotic resistance in 2016 found that around three quarters of all Swiss citizens are aware of the issue. The most widely known facts are that the unnecessary use of antibiotics reduces their effectiveness and that antibiotics are not an appropriate treatment for flu and colds. Most people surveyed knew that antibiotic resistance is a One Health topic, but they had differing opinions on the need for action in the different sub-areas. This awareness must be maintained and the message about the need to use antibiotics responsibly must be promoted even more strongly to all concerned.

The Federal Offices involved

Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH): There is a significant need for action in the field of medicine, since antibiotic-resistant bacteria are increasing worldwide and the danger is therefore growing that bacterial infections will become impossible to cure. Knowledge about antibiotic resistance helps patients, doctors and pharmacists to be aware of their responsibility to use antibiotics properly and to thus play their part in ensuring that antibiotics remain effective in the future.

Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO): StAR has the objective of maintaining the effectiveness of antibiotics over the long term for humans and animals. A central plank of the strategy is to undertake measures to prevent disease. The FSVO, together with the involved parties, is responsible for information and measures related to animals. A key factor is establishing the necessary conditions to keep animals healthy and requiring fewer antibiotics. Good hygiene, improved husbandry conditions and intensive herd management can all contribute to this.

Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG): The farmer is responsible for the health of his livestock. In addition to targeted prevention of individual diseases, the implementation of optimum management is essential. Specific projects for the implementation of information and measures on the farm are key – aspects such as genetics, husbandry, feeding and hygiene are generally tackled in a coordinated manner by collaboration or through initiatives by farmers or specific sectors. Appropriate husbandry also contributes to good health. This is promoted through contributions for particularly animal-friendly housing (the BTS programme) and regular access to outdoor areas (the RAUS programme).

Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN): Antibiotic resistance does not only affect humans and animals; it also affects the environment. Thus one uniform approach in line with the One Health principle is essential for maintaining antibiotic effectiveness. In addition to general reductions in micro-pollutants and antibiotic residues in the environment, research also plays an important role.