

Utrecht, June 10, 2020

Re: SDa report *Usage of Antibiotics in Agricultural Livestock in the Netherlands in 2019*

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is with great pleasure that the Netherlands Veterinary Medicines Institute (SDa) presents its report *Usage of Antibiotics in Agricultural Livestock in the Netherlands in 2019*. The SDa publishes this year's report to inform you on the amounts of antibiotics used in the Dutch veal, rabbit, turkey, poultry, cattle and pig farming sectors in 2019.

During the 2019 reporting year, antibiotic use in the veal, pig, cattle and broiler farming sectors declined by 11.3%, 8.2%, 4.9% and 2.2%, respectively. High antibiotic usage values were recorded for the turkey farming sector and the rabbit farming sector (i.e. meat rabbit farms).

The amount of antibiotics sold declined by 16.1% during the 2019 reporting year, and the 2019 sales data reveal a 69.6% reduction from the government-specified reference year of 2009.

Use of antibiotics that are of critical importance for public health (e.g. fluoroquinolones and third- and fourth-generation cephalosporins) remained low in most of the livestock sectors. Polymyxin use (including colistin use) did not exceed the European Medicines Agency's most stringent benchmark threshold, but is on the rise. Consequently, the SDa asks veterinarians and livestock farmers to minimize the use of polymyxin antibiotics. In 2018, the WHO decided to classify polymyxins as Highest Priority Critically Important Antimicrobials in its WHO List of Critically Important Antimicrobials for Human Medicine (the WHO CIA List), which was subsequently published in 2019. In light of this decision, the SDa feels a target value of 0 DDDA<sub>F</sub> is indicated for polymyxin use, given that this target value already applies to several other antibiotics included in the WHO's "Highest Priority Critically Important Antimicrobials" classification.

In last year's report on the usage of antibiotics in 2018, the SDa remarked that the discrepancy between the recorded amount of antibiotics sold and the recorded amount of antibiotics used exceeded the discrepancies observed for previous reporting years. For 2019, a 2.5% difference between the numbers of kilograms sold and used was observed. The SDa has established a working group in order to find out what causes these discrepancies. The SDa feels it is important to identify the underlying reasons for these differences, all the more so since sales data are also recorded in an EU database.

In last year's report, the SDa presented its new sector-specific benchmark thresholds representing acceptable use. As of the 2019 reporting year, livestock farms' performance with respect to their antibiotic usage levels is assessed by means of these SDa-defined benchmark thresholds for their particular type of farm or production category. The benchmark thresholds representing acceptable use will also be used to monitor livestock farms' usage level developments over the coming years. With regard to the types of farms and production categories whose usage levels distributions did not yet allow for a benchmark threshold representing acceptable use to be assigned, the SDa has decided to assess their performance by means of the 2018 action threshold.

A new benchmarking method for veterinarians is currently in the final stages of development. The SDa's existing benchmarking method has been used to assess veterinarians' performance with respect to their 2019 prescription patterns. The SDa expects the new benchmarking method for veterinarians to be presented within several months. The new benchmarking method's implementation process is expected to commence in the second half of 2020, in preparation for its actual application in 2021.

For several years, the SDa has been urging livestock sectors and veterinarians to focus their efforts primarily on livestock farms consistently recording high usage levels. Veterinarians and the livestock sectors for which the SDa has been able to derive benchmark thresholds representing acceptable use are currently drawing up improvement plans aimed at reducing the amounts of antibiotics used at those livestock farms characterized by high usage levels.

With the 2019 data indicating a further decline in the amounts of antibiotics used at livestock farms in the Netherlands, the SDa is confident that an approach focused on livestock farms with consistently high usage levels, as currently being developed by livestock farmers and veterinarians, will prove effective. It pleases the SDa to see that even though the Dutch livestock sector is faced with numerous challenges, it still manages to make prudent use of antibiotics a priority.

On behalf of the SDa board,

F.J.M. Werner, MSc  
*Chair*

H.M.G. Schreurs, DVM, PhD  
*Director*

Attachment: [SDa report Usage of Antibiotics in Agricultural Livestock in the Netherlands in 2019](#)