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Leaders in health and agriculture join together to promote appropriate antibiotic use

Today marks the beginning of international Antibiotic Awareness Week and Australian experts in human and animal health have joined forces to highlight the escalating problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley said, "AMR is a global public health issue and continues to be one of the major threats to human health. There is a real concern that without new antibiotics in the development pipeline some infections will be difficult or impossible to treat."

A number of initiatives are underway to combat AMR including the World Health Organization's (WHO) development of a global action plan providing a framework of interventions to slow the emergence and reduce the spread of AMR.

Locally, the Australian AMR Prevention and Containment Steering Group will oversee the development of a national strategy focussing on a "One Health" approach to addressing this issue.

Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp said "AMR continues to present a serious challenge across the medical, veterinary, food and agricultural sectors. There is an urgent need for the public and these sectors to work together to tackle antimicrobial resistance."

President of the Australian Veterinary Association, Dr Julia Nicholls, added: "Veterinarians have a critical role to play in the fight against antimicrobial resistance alongside the human health professions, industries, governments and the community. We can only make a difference to this global problem with the combined efforts of all of us."

Antibiotic Awareness Week in Australia is led by a national working group that involves the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission), the Australian Government Department of Health and Department of Agriculture, NPS MedicineWise, state and territory health departments and the Australian Veterinary Association.

The Commission's Chair, Professor Villis Marshall said "It is essential to raise awareness about the problem of AMR and the importance of responsible antibiotic use. Australia has one of the highest rates of antibiotic use in the world. Antibiotics are a precious, limited resource and must be preserved for now and in the future."

NPS MedicineWise CEO Dr Lynn Weekes says, "Antibiotic resistance is a very real threat, it is happening now in our community and everyone has a part to play in preserving the miracle of antibiotics."

"This Antibiotic Awareness Week, we encourage everyone to join the 45,000 Australians who have already made a personal commitment to join the fight against antibiotic resistance through the pledge on our web site or Facebook page."

Media enquiries can be directed to Lisa Parcsi, Communications Manager, by calling (02) 9126 3605 or email lisa.parcsi@safetyandquality.gov.au

For media enquiries to NPS MedicineWise: Elisabeth Bowdler on (02) 8217 8667, 0419 618 365 or email ebowdler@nps.org.au and Alex Chapman on (02) 8217 8733 or achapman@nps.org.au

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The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care - The Commission leads and coordinates improvements in safety and quality in health care across Australia. This includes developing national standards, providing advice about best practice, coordinating work in specific areas to improve outcomes for patients, and providing information, publications and resources for healthcare teams, healthcare providers, organisations and policy makers. One of the priority areas for the Commission has been in preventing infections and reducing antimicrobial resistance. For more information visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

NPS MedicineWise - Independent, evidence-based and not-for-profit, NPS MedicineWise enables better decisions about medicines and medical tests. NPS MedicineWise is part way through a 5 year campaign to reduce inappropriate use of antibiotics. We receive funding from the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit www.nps.org.au for more information.

The Australian Veterinary Association - The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the only national association representing veterinarians in Australia. Founded in 1921, the AVA today represents 8,500 members working in all areas of animal science, health and welfare.