New research ‘very encouraging’ for Australian livestock producers

The incidence of MRSA in livestock populations in Australia is amongst the lowest in the world, according to new research out of Sydney University.

The research points to very low rates of other drug resistant organisms, too, such as salmonella and ecoli. “This is terrific news and a big pat on the back for Australian food producers, because the world is increasingly viewing our produce as clean and green which drives demand and strengthens Australia’s reputation for premium product”, said Prof Jacqueline Norris.

Prof Norris is one of 300 of Australia’s pre-eminent infectious diseases specialists from the human and animal fields who will meet in Melbourne on Thursday at a summit to finalise plans for initiatives to slow the spread of antibiotic resistance in the community.

The Summit is expected to call on the Federal Government to establish a unique co-ordinating centre to bring human and animal health issues under the one roof.

“For these findings are very positive and encouraging, there is still much we need to do,” says Prof Cheryl Jones, President of the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID).

“Antimicrobial resistance is a truly global problem that has the potential to take us back to a pre-antibiotic era”, she said.

“We don’t know the full extent of prescription use of antibiotics in the community; nor about the extent of their use in livestock industries or veterinary practices. We don’t even have a comprehensive list of superbugs present in Australian hospitals, let alone in the community or in animals,” she said.

But the research indicates that following strict regulatory regimes can reduce the incidence of multi-resistant organisms making their way into our ecosystem, and that’s encouraging.

Laura Hardefeldt is a PhD student at University of Melbourne. Her view is that there are some structural issues that would help further. “We need to ban the use of antibiotics for growth”, she says. Although many of the livestock producers have already adopted this practice, she thinks it needs to be clearly outlawed. She also believes that Veterinary practices should have legally enforced antimicrobial stewardship practices, in the same way that hospitals do. “We need to build responsible stewardship into everyday practice to send the message that this is a serious matter that impacts on us all,” she said.
The AMR Summit

Antibiotic resistance is one of the foremost issues that will affect health care worldwide, including Australia, in the coming decades.

The Executive Councils of the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) and the Australian Society for Antimicrobials (ASA) strongly believe that there is a requirement for a debate within Australia on what actions need to be taken to address the issue and will host a Summit on Antimicrobial Resistance to be held at Walter & Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne on 29 June 2017.

Contact:
John Heselev
ASID/ASA Media Liaison
0401 885 784
john@wellcomms.com.au