

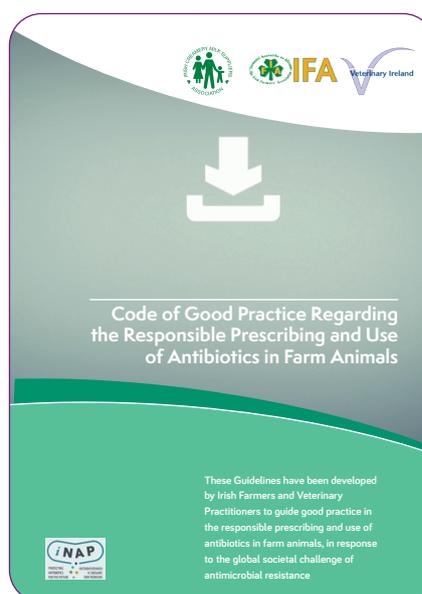
Antibiotic change and preparation for winter 2022

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The use of antibiotics on farms is changing. “Use as little as possible and as much as necessary” is the basis of both responsible and prudent use of antibiotics on your farm. Some people may think that this doesn’t affect them, but it affects everyone who either prescribes or administers antibiotics. Bacterial resistance to antibiotics, referred to as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), is increasing throughout the world. If the right antibiotic is not administered to the right animal for the right disease for the right duration at the right dose, resistance to antibiotics can develop, resulting in that antibiotic ceasing to be effective to treat that bacteria on your farm and the potential for resistance to be transferred to bacteria that cause disease in humans.

Since January 2022, on farm use of antibiotics has changed as a result of EU Regulation:

- Antibiotics are not to be applied routinely nor used to compensate for poor hygiene, inadequate animal husbandry or lack of care or compensate for poor farm management.
- Preventive administration of antibiotics to an animal or group of animals is only possible where your veterinary practitioner determines that an individual animal or a restricted group of animals are at a very high risk of infection.
- The use of antibiotics to control the spread of disease in a group of animals with infection can only be carried out if the practitioner determines that the risk of spread of an infection or of an infectious disease within the group is high and where no other appropriate alternatives are available to the practitioner.



What opportunities are available to reduce antibiotic use on your farm? An important first step is to draw up a Herd Health Plan to ensure the best possible health and welfare of the cattle on the farm, which, in turn, leads to optimum animal performance and productivity. The Herd Health Plan should be devised as a collaborative effort with your veterinary practitioner. The plan is developed based on their unique personal knowledge of the farm. Mastitis control as part of the Herd Health Plan is a key area for dairy farms, accounting for the majority of antibiotic use in most herds. Antibiotic usage to control mastitis during lactation or the dry period can be reduced in the following ways:

- Understand what is best for your cows taking into consideration what is happening at herd level using your monthly bulk tank SCC from your Co-op. SCC records for individual cows can give you a better picture of where problems might lie within the herd. If you are not recording each cow, it is never too late to start.
- Find out the type of bacteria involved in your mastitis cases. Sampling of 6-10 cows with mastitis of varying lactation numbers during the year is all that is required. This will provide an adequate bacterial profile and list whether they are susceptible or resistant to a range of antibiotics.
- Maintain accurate records of antibiotic usage in your cows: date of administration, amount of antibiotic used, duration of treatment, number/freeze brand of cows, withdrawal period and unused antibiotic. This record is essential when looking at treatment required at drying off.
- Start planning for selective dry cow therapy in your herd this Autumn if not already started. If eligible, [click here](#) to sign up for a free Dry Cow Consult.



New changes to Dry Cow Therapy for 2022

New Veterinary Medicines Regulation EU 2019/6 which came into effect in January 2022 changes how your veterinary practitioner can approach prescribing antimicrobial dry cow therapy. This is to ensure the continued effectiveness of antibiotics and to reduce the development of resistance.

A blanket approach to drying off is no longer permitted, instead your veterinary practitioner must adopt a **selective approach to dry cow therapy** when prescribing dry cow mastitis tubes for your herd.

With a selective approach, all cows are considered individually in terms of the risk of mastitis over the dry period. Your veterinary practitioner will determine if a dry cow tube is needed at drying off, in some cows an internal teat sealant alone will be sufficient.

A selective approach involves doing a risk assessment at the individual animal level to determine which cows will need antimicrobial treatment over the dry period.

Dry cow tubes can be prescribed but on an individual cow basis where there is evidence of a risk of infection in that cow.

Your veterinary practitioner needs **individual cow information** to assess the risk of infection to the individual cows in your herd.

Information includes:

- Records of all mastitis cases
- Previous treatments and related outcomes
- Any milk quality data including somatic cell counts, bacterial culture and antibiotic susceptibility testing

Milk recording is recommended as a key tool to better inform the development of a targeted dry cow mastitis control strategy.

Your practitioner may also need to examine the cows and do further tests. To ensure an effective approach to mastitis control, a selective dry-cow strategy for your herd must be worked out carefully, hence the importance of engaging in good time with your veterinary practitioner when making farm-level decisions.



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