

Animal and Environment Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Delivery Group for Wales

Minutes of the meeting held at over Microsoft Teams on the 2nd December 2020

Members Present

Gavin Watkins (GW)	Geraint Hamer (GH)
Christianne Glossop (CG)	Amy Jackson (AJ)
Ifan Lloyd (IF)	Christopher Teale (CT)
Amelia Stevens (AS)	Ian Jones (IJ)
Fraser Broadfoot (FB)	Wyn Evans (WE)
Gareth Thomas (GT)	Emma Hayhurst (EH)
Rob Smith (RS)	Gwyn Jones (GJ)
Gwen Rees (GR)	Sian Timms (ST)
Marc Alford-Evans (MAE)	

Apologies

Marion Lyons (ML)	Catherine Cody (CC)
Ann Davies (AD)	Estevao Simoes (ES)
Eifiona Williams (EW)	Robin Howe (RH)

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions (GW)

1. GW welcomed the members present to the seventh quarterly Wales AMR Delivery Group (DG) meeting.
2. GW told the DG that PG will be leaving the group permanently and suggested that the secretariat write a note of thanks to email him on behalf of the DG. **(ACTION035)**
3. GW introduced the two new members to the DG, Christopher Teale (CT) and Gwen Rees (GR).

Agenda Item 2: Minutes and Actions from The Last Meeting (ST)

4. ST reminded the members present that to save time, we will be requesting any corrections and edits to the minutes from the last quarterly DG meeting a fortnight before they are added to the DG webpage.

5. ST read through the recently closed and ongoing actions of the DG work.

Agenda Item 3: Round Table Updates (Group)

6. GR updated the DG on Arwain Vet Cymru's work. She reported that the vet prescription champion course has had a very good recruitment (80%). The discussion groups in the sessions have brought about passionate discussions for their topics. The champions have given really useful feedback on these sessions and have already presented their action plans for their practices. Last week, they had a policy type workshop to discuss what they felt was a barrier to their ways of prescribing and how to move their aims forward. GR explained that has been really pleased by what she's seen so far from the participants.
7. GW began to tell the DG that a letter from the prescribing champion vets had been received by the Veterinary Royal College. GR explained to the DG that the prescribing champions feel that one of the major barriers is the definition of animals under their care and it is something that continues to be brought up. The Royal Veterinary College's report on under our care and people's definition of under care is making them use prescriptions that are less than ideal. It was strongly felt by the champions so they wrote the letter so that the Royal College can't say that they've haven't had the issue brought to their attention.
8. FB said he was surprised that farmers were buying antibiotics from more than one veterinary practice and GR confirmed that there is an issue existing in some parts of Wales where farmers will go to two or three practices to choose the cheapest medicines that can be made available to them. GW reminded the DG that in the AMR in Animal and the Environment Five Year Implementation Plan, one of the objectives is to encourage veterinary practices to carry out better prescribing.
9. WE reported that he is aware that farmers, such as himself, go to more than one veterinary practice because they own live stock in more than one area. He told the DG that he had recently gotten NADIS involved in their dairy bull calf work. If they can work together then hopefully avoid any increase of antibiotic use in beef. He also asked if the procurement of the RDP AMR had yet been decided. ST gave an update that the application process is closed and that they are being assessed. Applicants should be informed before the Christmas break. GW added that he was pleased with the response in the submitted applications. He felt that applicants understood what was being asked and now colleagues in RPW are working on the next stage.

10. GT mentioned that the Young Farmers Club are keen to contribute to the education of better use of antibiotics but currently there are no events being held due to COVID-19 cancellations. He is currently working through the YFC sub-committees and he hopes to bring another update to the next DG meeting in March. He went on to raise his own concerns about farmers changing prescription providers. GR explained that she finds that farmers are doing it for business reasons and not because they have any ill intentions.
11. IJ wanted to make clear that he hasn't had any issues with other farmers going to more than one veterinary practice. He updated the group on his current work with lamb and beef and has been pleased with the results he's been getting. Gamebird sector is usually a high user so he has been involved in the creation of online programmes to better educate farmers in that sector.
12. IL began by giving an update on his work in the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group. The CHAWG AMU group held their final meeting and invited FB to add more on the data information that was presented. GW added that he wants the DG to receive an update on the data collected on lamb and beef. IJ agreed. GW added on the back of that that he and ST have had a meeting with AHDB about the E-medicines Hub to understand what they are planning for the UK. The DG aim is to have a Wales wide data to be able to measure if the DG work is leading to the reduction of antibiotics but he also agrees that Wales needs to feed into UK wide data.

13. CT updated the DG on a few issues with the work he's involved in lately. He explained that for the last six years the UK has been involved in EU legislation on measuring data on slaughtered animals on their drug intake. Post Brexit, this will be maintained and we will not be diverging. He went on to mention that vet pathogens are tracked in a programme which is conducted by batch testing and they will need FYC testing plates. They have had problems of finding salmonella in pet food being fed to companion animals and that this is endemic in other parts in mainland Europe. He mentioned that this contamination is also a risk to the health of the handler. Finally, there has been some publicity on "costing the earth" on surge. They have good relations with seal sanctuaries that do swabs and some of the bacteria they are contracting are from humans also he mentioned that there are a number of cases of boat propeller wounds and bites from other seals. Those resistant bacteria in humans seem to be carried into the sea and are being found in the seals. GW asked if there have been any parallel findings in slurry or farm waste carrying resistant bacteria. CT explained that they also find bacteria on seals to see where else are those bacteria strains found but they have not linked them to farmed animals yet. GW also asked what the difference between MIC testing is and the testing we have been doing now? CT explained that they are measuring the susceptibility of bacteria and there are different methods to carrying this out. Using a disk with bacteria on it and seeing if the bacteria grows which is the traditional method. It's versatile because plates can be switched and give quick results but it might not be robust. The other method is putting the bacteria into tubes with different concentrations of antibiotic to measure the resistance of the bacteria. IJ mentioned that MIC testing is the way forward in his opinion and it demonstrates the level of resistant compared to the older tool of fusion.
14. AS asked about the point made by CT on pet food, she wondered if looking into potential label warnings to add to pet food packaging to warn that consumers maybe bringing dangerous pathogens into their home. She mentioned that she has been in contact with GW and ST to get a better idea of the Wales wide level of prescribing via a survey. ST added that she has circulated an email with her and IL to make sure they're all linked before discussing with RUMA. GW mentioned that he thought it was a good idea for a starting point for the DG and for the practices themselves to understand better where they sit on the spectrum.

15. CG added that she recognises that vet practices feel pressured to compete with each other on pricing. She finds it interesting that farmers have more than one vet practice they go to also because they have livestock in two different locations as WE mentioned. She is excited to hear that so many people are trying to improve on stopping the spread of AMR in Wales and beyond. She mentioned that she is really pleased to hear about the growing activity at Aberystwyth University. She encouraged the DG to continue to be persistent despite the difficult times we're currently going through and that we may be going through in the future. She thanked all the DG members present. WE clarified that he agrees that farmers should have one core vet. He also added that he was proud that the Vet College has come to Aberystwyth.

Agenda Item 4: VMD Update (FB)

16. FB began his update by circulating some useful links¹ to the DG. He began by mentioning the small animal data published by Scotland using SAVSNET and that VMD are looking at getting equivalent UK level data. In terms of the VMD, PG will be leaving however they have had two new vets joining who will be working on resistance and policy. They have yet to decide who will be taking PG's place on the DG. Currently, the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill has cleared the House of Commons and is sitting in the House of Lords. This gives the primary power to amend the existing 2013 Veterinary Medicine Regulations after the transition period. We are revisiting and reviewing the current VMR and EU regs to consider if we would like to make changes. Any changes proposed will be subject to formal consultation, which won't take place before Spring 2021. FB is currently reviewing two EU documents, a draft delegated act relating to sales/usage collection and rules for administration of oral products other than in-feed, and will send a summary of these documents to the group. FB discussed the UK-VARSS report and explained that UK antibiotic sales for food producing animals increased by 1.5mg/kg to 31mg/kg in 2019, although use has still reduced by 50% over the last 5 years. Sales of HP-CIAs continue to decline, especially in cattle. Finally, CHAWG AMU published updated benchmarking metrics for dairy and beef, which now includes metrics for calves, and this will be incorporated into the Medicine Hub (which is due to be launched in January).

¹ *Legislation Overview* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNGdZxv0ivM&feature=youtu.be>
New EC Consultation - <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/11572-Method-for-the-Collection-of-data-on-antimicrobial-medicinal-products-used-in-animals>
EU Regulation (including document on oral use) - <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/veterinary-regulatory/overview/implementation-new-veterinary-medicines-regulation>
Dairy and Beef Benchmarking Metrics - <https://ahdb.org.uk/cattle-health-and-welfare-group-chawg>

17. GR asked why sheep, and cows not included on the antibiotic use infographic in VARSS. FB explained that they have never included sheep data, but the cattle dairy and beef data is included in the main report. However, the coverage is low (35% for dairy and less than 10% for beef) and it was decided only to include data where there is 90% or more coverage in the infographic. This is because people were using the infographic and not providing the context that this data is from a small, convenience sample and may not be representative.

Agenda Item 5: RUMA – Target Task Force (GJ & AJ)

18. GJ thanked everyone for their support and hard work over the last year. The industry's targets have been impressive. There is a slight increase in their reduction targets for 2021. He wanted to congratulate Wales on the loads of different initiatives that have been taking place, in particular with Arwain Vet Cymru. They have worked closely with PG in the VMD. They have a RUMA animal companion group which has another meeting soon. CG has been supportive and to echo what she said that resistance is the key under the one health plan. Their approach to the targets this time has been more targeted and complete. They had to do this and make sure that they had a more credible document to get the industry to stick to objectives and aim for targets. It is a more holistic approach and he thinks it's great to see different industries are taking different approaches.

19. AJ presented a presentation slideshow to the DG.

20. GW was pleased to read that Fiona would be working on this project and had wondered if some of the barriers to getting dairy farm data are to do with their contracts with milk buyers? AJ confirmed that it's all to do with the buyers. GJ went on to explain in further detail that they have data holding/consultant groups in dairy who are contracted often by processors or/and retailers. GJ thought their only option is to accept aggregated data from these sources in the first instance. He added that if Red Tractor and Defra Pathway in England start asking for farm data on the E.Medicine Hub, they might have to form their national data base on dairy data.. RS said that he was disappointed with the dairy data issue. He commented that as a vet who does a lot of dairy work, he continually collects and analyses antibiotic use on farm. GJ mentioned that he now has retailers to put their direct supply groups on E.Medicine Hub (7-8,000 farms with dairy/beef/lamb groups). Ironically, these same groups are handling the data for them but will be told to put it on the E.Medicine Hub. He said he hoped that industry pressure will be brought to bear in time and that dairy farming will not be disadvantaged as lack of data (which is collected) is not being used for the good of the industry by a small number of players. He thinks government and retail pressure will ramp up if they keep struggling.
21. WE said it shows what can be achieved when the industry comes together to collaborate in this way. He thinks vaccination is key in going forward with this work.
22. IL added his thanks to AJ and he said that he thought there are some significant environmental benefits from this work. Maybe consider the NFU's carbon footprint target, this could be contributing to their objectives. AJ added that it would be interesting to see if carbon output has been calculated.
23. GW commented on vaccinating sheep, Fiona Lovett had explained to him that there are good and bad vet med costs if you're not effectively keeping the animals healthy. Reducing the costs of production is something that Vets are usually consulted on.

Agenda Item 6: Environment Update (GH)

24. GH agreed to submit the update below after the meeting –
25. Water Branch (WB) has secured funding from WG's Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme to undertake an initial desk based study on the transmission of AMR in the rural water environment.

26. The study will start in January and will be led by Professor Andrew Singer, assisted by Dr Isobel Stanton, at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH).
27. The research aims to improve our understanding of the hazards from AMR in the environment by analysing the ongoing research initiatives, identifying gaps and evaluating how existing research could inform Wales' policy development. The report will present a series of options for further research and environmental monitoring. It is expected to be completed in March 2021. GH can look into the possibility of the UKCEH team presenting key findings to the DG.
28. April Hayes, a PhD student, will join Water Branch on a 3 month placement (with possible extension of up to 6 months), and will assist with Water Branch's policy work on AMR. April's work will supplement the research being undertaken by UKCEH.
29. WB continues to engage with key stakeholders – NRW, UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR), Water Industry Forum and academic organisations – to further our knowledge and evidence base of AMR in the environment.
30. WB hoping to secure additional funding to analyse some of the sampling data collected by Emma Hayhurst's study of antibiotic resistant bacteria and genes in the River Wye.

Agenda Item 7: Dŵr Cymru and UK Water Industry Research (EH)

31. EH presented her slideshow to the DG.
32. GW said that it was a fantastic presentation. He asked that the five year plans for both the UK and Wales one are under the WHO plans and they have a new section on environmental monitoring but he wanted to know what are we supposed to be monitoring specifically. EH said that trying to detect Antibiotics in the environment is difficult and might need to include more funding

AOB (All)

33. It was agreed that the AOB below would be sent to DG members via email after the meeting –
34. Date of the next meeting: 25th March - This will already be in your calendars and we'll circulate the papers and joining instructions closer to the time. (All 2021 meetings dates have been confirmed and invites issued)
35. Future engagement opportunities: We are due to meet with Liverpool University to discuss their AMR and AMU Livestock Strategy on the 10th December. Also, we are due to meet with RUMA's Companion Animal and Equine Group on the 17th December. As always, you are more than welcome to join any of these discussions and please forward any suggestions for other stakeholder groups that you'd like to suggest engagement with.
36. Delivery Group survey results - Please remember to complete the survey by COP 18th December. We will circulate some bullet points to summarize the responses in the New Year.