

## British poultry sector in the lead

The animal production industry is under pressure to ensure a responsible use of antibiotics. Industry organizations such as the British Poultry Council (BPC) have and will have a pivotal role in ensuring the implementation of measures, as well as recording of information to lead improvements based on the analysis of results. Organizations like this are perfectly positioned to manage the demands of the industry, national governments, state governments and the general public, whilst maintaining an open channel of communication amongst them all.

### The British Poultry Council

The British Poultry Council is a trade association for producers of poultry meat from chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. The Council addresses issues on all parts of the production chain: breeding, hatching, growing, and processing. The Council also works as a link between the poultry industry and the government, helping to ensure industry is heard whilst at the same time ensuring members comply with government guidelines and undergo the changes that are required by the authorities.

One of the major issues that has been discussed amongst different sectors of the animal production industry is the potential link between the use of antibiotics in animal production and the increase in the number of bacteria that are becoming anti-microbial resistant, in the animal and human populations. Any use of antibiotics be they in human medicine or for the treatment of animals will naturally select for populations of bacteria which are resistant to the antibiotics which are used. The BPC has developed a strategy to monitor the antibiotic usage and put in place measures to ensure that responsible use of antibiotics is practiced in the UK poultry meat sector.

### The beginning

BPC launched an Antimicrobial Stewardship Programme in 2011 to ensure a continuous review of medicine usage in poultry meat as well as promoting best practice across the sector. **The programme focuses on education of poultry producers with regard to the problems posed by antimicrobial resistance and in the application of best practice in the use of antibiotics on farm in order to reduce overall antibiotic usage within the production chain. Sharing of collated data further offers regulators a clearer picture of usage trends within this sector.**

### The Journey

#### 1 – Data collection

In 2011 the BPC started to collect information from poultry farms (mainly chicken, turkeys and ducks). Its membership encompassed approximately 85% of UK poultry meat producers and as such the data base developed as the key collection hub from which information could be shared directly with the [Veterinary Medicines Directorate \(VMD\) central database](#). Producers submit their data to the BPC on a quarterly-basis, using a standardised data sheet. Quantities of active ingredients, by product type, are entered into the sheet by producers and are reported as a figure of usage in comparison to the quantity of production in a given period.

The collection method was validated in 2012, and now represents accurate usage figures by this sector and replaces the crude evaluation of sales data which compiled usage for both poultry and pigs sectors into one figure; such a system was neither accurate nor drove change.

## 2 – Sharing Data

The BPC collection method was developed for use by the industry but now allows data to be easily submitted to facilitate the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to fulfil its reporting obligation to the EU. Under these obligations EU member states are required to collect actual usage data from the meat chicken, cattle and pig sectors. Finally, due to the intuitive way data is collected and presented it is easier to analyse, to trend and to compare and contrast, and thereby help drive best practice across industry members

## 3 – Assess and improve

After the collection method was validated, it was possible to start analysing the data and develop strategies concerning the usage of antibiotic in the British Poultry Sector. The first strategy had two work streams, the first was to **significantly reduce or eliminate classes of antibiotics classified by the World Health Organisation as “Most Critically Important to Human Medicine”**. Under this work stream, Fluoroquinolones, Macrolides, Cephalosporin and Glycopeptides were the key focus. The second prong was for the industry to take action to reduce and or eliminate prophylactic administration of antibiotic. Today there is no cephalosporin or Glycopeptide usage as well as Fluoroquinolones and Macrolides.

Antibiotic use peaked to just over four tonnes in 2013. Since then there has been a consistent year-on-year drop in use of 50%. Equally today prophylactic usage across the UK poultry meat sector has stopped and antibiotics are only used therapeutically.

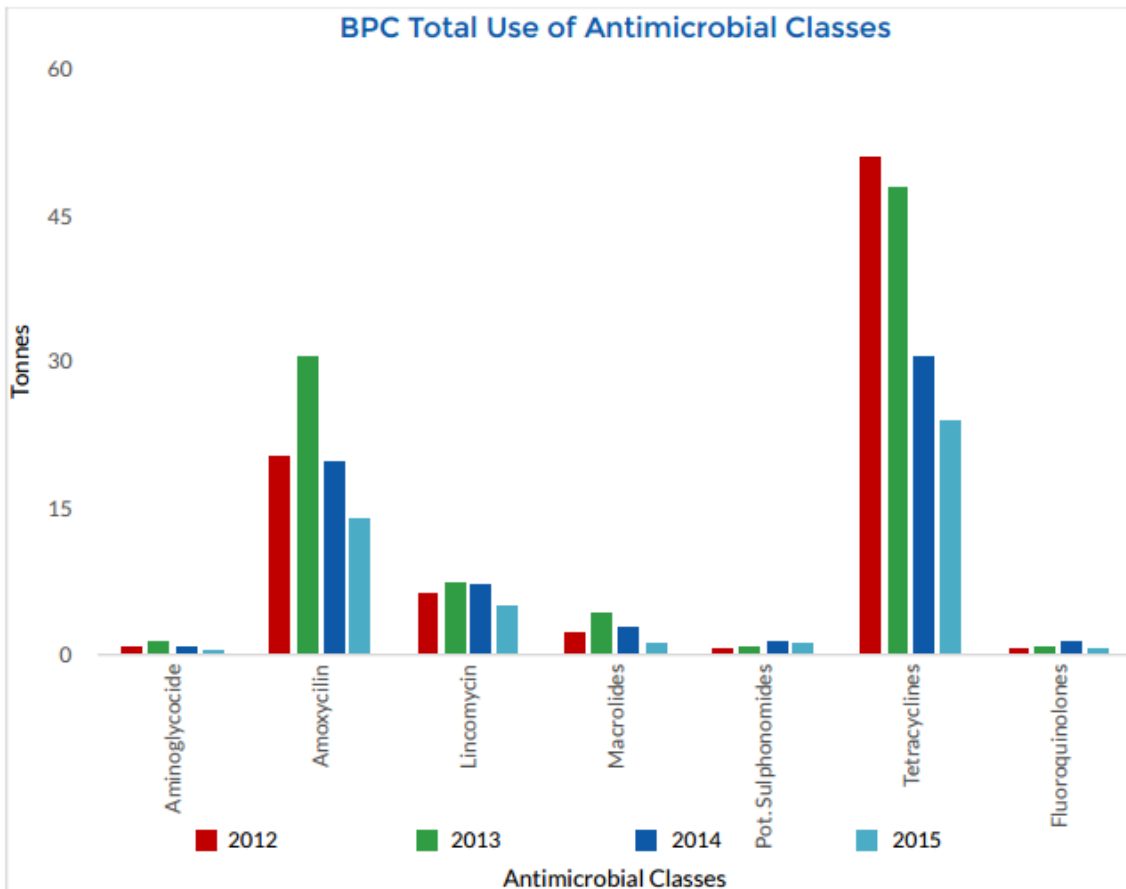
**“The BPC Antibiotic Stewardship Scheme recognised the importance of colistin as an antibiotic of last resort for human medicine. From 2016, the BPC membership undertook not to use colistin in their flocks.”**

Following on from this first strategy, benchmarking and sharing of data became the cornerstone to achieve lower usage. Benchmarking is a powerful tool that can only be used when accurate data is collected. When in place it can help drive the movement for a more responsible use, by helping producers and companies understand where they sat compared to their peers and hopefully what improvements were/are required. Data was shared along with best practice and increasingly members adopted better husbandry techniques and hygiene practices which drove down the overall need for antibiotics.

## 4- Communicating

The final key strategy and to some degree classified as the most difficult by the BPC Antibiotic Stewardship Scheme team, was to communicate the journey and the results publicly. In April 2016 the BPC published the first [BPC Antibiotic Stewardship Scheme report](#). This report talks about the progress of the Antibiotic Stewardship Scheme, data collected, and quantities of antibiotics used across the different species of the UK poultry sector. The report helped the BPC to communicate to the government, to the public and to all stakeholders (Figure one).

*Figure 1 - BPC total use of Antimicrobial Classes from 2012 to 2015*



Source: British Poultry Council, 2016

Reg Smith, Chairman of the BPC Antibiotic Stewardship Scheme, stated “Today the industry has done the hard work in this arena and is leading the way for other livestock sectors to follow. The journey we started has achieved much but is not complete, having made significant improvements thus far the industry can now focus on balancing the need of limiting antibiotic usage to protect antibiotic efficacy and the need of livestock owners to protect and promote the welfare of the livestock under their care. We will continue to work with all our members to achieve both goals.”

The BPC has just released a new report (June 2017)<sup>1</sup>. The new report demonstrated that the actions continue to be very effective by allowing to stop the preventive use of antibiotics and to ban the use of Colistin across the poultry sector. It was also reported a further reduction of antibiotic use in the British poultry sector (71% reduction between 2012 and 2016).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.britishpoultry.org.uk/download/bpc-antibiotic-stewardship-report-2017/#>