Antibiotic resistance in pets is becoming a greater challenge, much like it is in humans. Antibiotic resistance is when the bacteria causing an infection are not affected by the antibiotic, making it ineffective as treatment.

**Antibiotics are not always the answer**

Not every infectious disease needs antibiotic treatment (for example, viral infections). Don’t ask for antibiotics if your vet says that your pet does not need them.

**Antibiotics can be lifesaving drugs**

Antibiotics are vital to treat and prevent disease in animals and humans. But the risk that the organism causing the disease will develop resistance to them increases every time they are used. To make sure antibiotics stay effective now and in the future, they must be strictly controlled and used only when really necessary and with caution.

**Keep your animal healthy**

A healthy animal is better equipped to fight off infections. Do your best to keep your pet healthy by feeding it food with a high nutritional value, providing a healthy lifestyle, having it vaccinated regularly and taking it to your vet for an examination each year. If your pet gets sick, go to your vet immediately.

**Do not try to treat your pet yourself**

Do not share antibiotics between pets or re-use tablets that were prescribed for an earlier illness. Stopping and starting antibiotics inappropriately may result in an increased risk of resistance. They may not be appropriate for your pet’s current condition, or they may be...
toxic for certain animals, out of date or contaminated. Never give human medicines to your pet as they could be dangerous.

**Diagnostic tests might be needed**

Your vet may need to carry out a laboratory test to find out whether treatment with antibiotics is really necessary and, if so, which antibiotic will work best. Your vet will then be able to prescribe the right antibiotic for the right bacteria. Although such tests involve extra cost, they may help to save money by avoiding inappropriate antibiotics. Older antibiotics, such as penicillin, are often as effective as modern antibiotics.

**Follow the dosage instructions**

Make sure that you give your pet all the recommended doses of an antibiotic as prescribed by your vet, even if your pet seems to be better after a few doses. This helps cure the current infection and will also help to keep the bacteria from discovering new ways of being resistant to the antibiotic.

**Top Tip**

People’s hands are the most common way of spreading germs. Although these germs can be harmless they may also cause diseases (such as stomach bugs) and bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics, such as MRSA and MRSP, can be transferred between animals and people. Make sure you wash your hands frequently and properly!

**Talk to your vet**

If you have worries or questions about antibiotic resistance in your pet, you should discuss these with your vet. He or she is your expert and best advisor. Try to build up a good relationship with your vet so you can work together to keep your pet healthy and happy.

**Glossary**

**Antibiotics**: drugs that kill disease-causing agents such as bacteria. They are not effective against viruses.

**MRSA**: meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. These highly resistant bacteria are typically found in human hospitals but can also cause infection in animals.
MRSP: meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius*. These highly resistant bacteria typically cause infections in animals but, on rare occasions, have caused human infection.

For more information visit [www.antibioticguardian.com](http://www.antibioticguardian.com)

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About the BVA

We, the BVA, are the national representative body for the UK veterinary profession. We support our members to fulfil their roles for the benefit of animals and the public.

This is one of a series of leaflets we have produced for animal owners. You can find more at [www.bva.co.uk/public](http://www.bva.co.uk/public).