

Antimicrobial resistance and Australian wildlife

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global emerging issue for wildlife and ecosystem health, and Wildlife Health Australia is highlighting that the administration of antimicrobial medications to wildlife requires careful supervision by veterinarians.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared AMR as one of the top ten global public health threats facing humanity, and November 18 to 24 is World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021, with this year's theme; 'Spread Awareness, Stop Resistance'.

"The impact of AMR in wildlife is likely to increase in importance as alterations in land use, climate change, animal movements and human activities bring wildlife, livestock and people into closer contact," said Wildlife Health Australia Chief Executive Officer Dr Rupert Woods.

"Veterinarians and all of those involved in the care and rehabilitation of Australian wildlife should be vigilant to prevent AMR. Treatment of wildlife with veterinary medicines, including the administration of antimicrobials, should be carefully supervised by veterinarians. Antimicrobial stewardship should be practiced when treating and managing all wildlife species."

The presence and significance of AMR in wildlife and the environment of Australia requires ongoing research and data collection. Stopping AMR requires a One Health approach, considering both human and animal health, along with our shared environment, with coordinated action across all sectors where antimicrobials are used.

"Not all sick animals need antimicrobials – these medicines should only be used under veterinary supervision. It's important that everyone involved in the care of wildlife species, incorporates best practice biosecurity and hygiene measures to reduce the need for antimicrobial use," said Dr Woods.

During World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, Wildlife Health Australia is spreading the word that AMR could impact the health of both people and animals, so we all have a role to play in stopping AMR.

Fast Facts

- **Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) is the peak coordinating body for wildlife health in Australia.**
- **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.**
- **For more information about antimicrobial resistance and Australian wildlife, read our factsheet:**
[https://www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Portals/0/Documents/FactSheets/Multiple groups/Antimicrobial Resistance and Australian Wildlife.pdf](https://www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Portals/0/Documents/FactSheets/Multiple%20groups/Antimicrobial%20Resistance%20and%20Australian%20Wildlife.pdf)