



VetPartners Antibiotic Stewardship Report 2025



Welcome to the VetPartners Antimicrobial Stewardship Report 2025!

The World Health Organisation's World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week (WAAW) 2025 is upon us! The purpose of this global campaign is to raise awareness and understanding about antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and its threat to human, animal and plant health. The theme this year is **Act Now: Protect Our Present, Secure Our Future**. This bold action-orientated approach encourages stakeholders to 'translate the political commitments into tangible, accountable, life-saving interventions' (<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-amr-awareness-week/2025>).

Clinical Quality Improvement (QI) programmes are a way of identifying areas to progress clinical practice and documenting change. The Clinical Board are delighted to share some more information from our QI programme that is focussed on both antibiotic stewardship, and how we can progress in using these important medicines in clinical practice across the whole VetPartners group.

In this report we share data and activities that we are undertaking to progress and develop antibiotic stewardship. Our work focuses on the 5 Rs of antibiotics stewardship/resistance: **Reduce, Refine, Replace, Review and Responsibility** which is demonstrated throughout different parts of our work. We are continually showing how our work can lead to change.

To start any change pathway, we need to understand what we are currently doing. For example, our Italian team have published their report on how they use different antibiotics in certain conditions. This kind of data is the foundation of QI work. We need to know what we are doing now so we can action and **review** changes as they happen. Our teams across the group are working in many areas to help support the profession including impacting policy makers.

We are delighted to see that our use of antibiotics continues to **reduce** and has dropped by 34% between 2024 and 2025 and by 63% since 2021 – this is amazing! When we focus on **refining** the use of some of the critically important antibiotics, we find decreases of up to 50% in our equine practices. Our teams are also working on how to **replace** the use of antibiotics in certain conditions and following on from our focus on metronidazole use in dogs during WAAW 2024 we have found a reduction in use by 25%! We have had similar success in promoting the use of NSAIDs in farm animals to safeguard health and welfare in an environment of significant reduction in the use of antibiotics. We use WAAW as a time to **reflect** and review our work in this area and celebrate the progress we have made.

So, our teams are acting NOW to **protect our present** practice and animal welfare. Through protecting these important medicines and progressing the way we **responsibly** use them we will **secure the future of human, animal and planetary health**. I hope you enjoy reading this report and I would encourage you to get in touch, tell us what you think, share ideas or suggest partnerships moving forward.

Please contact us by emailing clinical.board@vetpartners.co.uk.

Thank you for your help,



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Group Director of Clinical Research and Excellence in Practice, VetPartners



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Antibiotic usage and monitoring

Novel baseline monitoring of antibiotic usage is key to measuring the impact of our teams' actions. For four years now, we have been monitoring purchasing over time relative to the number of prescribers (full time equivalent vets - FTE[Vet]) in our organisation. This is not quite the same as usage, but we have shown that most of the antibiotic products purchased are prescribed, making this a good measure. This large-scale view of our antibiotic use over time shows our teams that they are making a difference and enables us to share the success of our work with others.



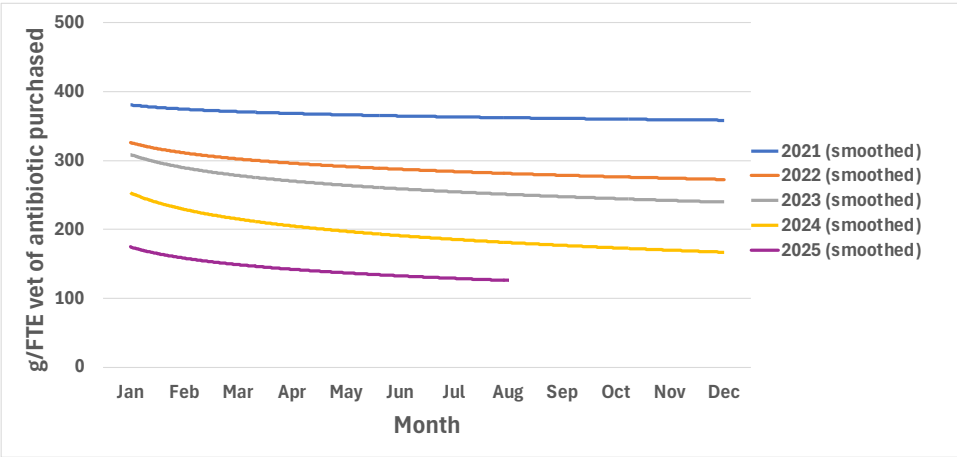
- We have reduced our antibiotic purchasing by 62.8% since 2021!
- We have reduced our antibiotic purchasing by 33.5% since last year



Key Facts from 2025 include:

- Across the VetPartners UK team between January and August 2025 we bought approximately 2 tonnes of antibiotics.
- The actual figure was 2,100kg (compared to 3,164kg in 2024, 3,829kg in 2023, 3,899kg in 2022 and 4,673kg in 2021).
- On average we bought a little over 1kg of antibiotics per vet over this time period.
- The actual figure was 1.15kg/FTE[vet] (compared to 1.73kg in 2024, 2.20kg/FTE[vet] in 2023, 2.41kg/FTE[vet] in 2022 and 3.09kg/FTE[vet] in 2021).

It's incredible to see this continuous decline in the amount of antibiotics we use. QI programmes should progress care and make a difference – we are! This is testament to our amazing teams and their ongoing commitment to progressing practice and safeguarding antibiotic use.



Graph 1: Antibiotic purchasing by month January 2021 – August 2025 measured in grams per full time equivalent vet [FTE]



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Teamwork across the group

As we grow our clinical communities across the VetPartners group, we are delivering Clinical Quality Improvement programmes, including one focussed on antibiotic stewardship. This was a topic of conversation at our recent meeting in Madrid where clinical board leaders met from across the group to discuss the clinical excellence strategy.



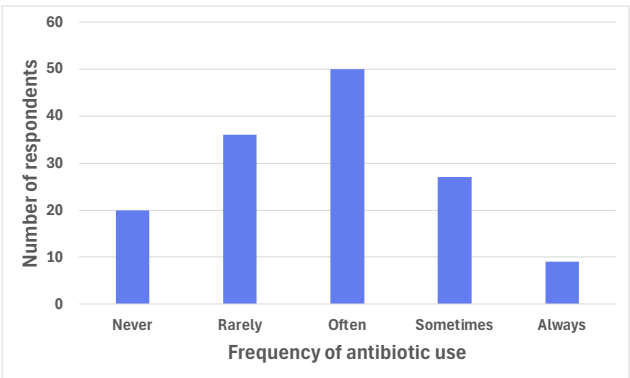
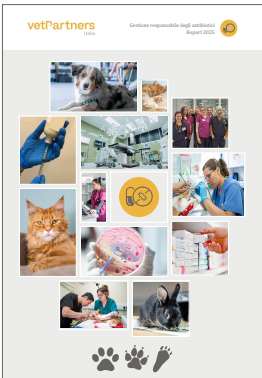
Across the group, many things influence how and when we use antibiotics, highlighting both similarities and differences including:

- The legal and regulatory systems across the group vary and this has led to changes in how clinicians prescribe antibiotics. By understanding how these changes were implemented we can help the whole group.
- In some countries it is compulsory to report use of antibiotics to the government and therefore benchmark monitoring of use in small animal practice.
- All teams are able to prescribe antibiotics but not necessarily dispense them from the practice. These differences affect the way we communicate with our clients to ensure responsible antibiotic stewardship.
- The availability of certain antibiotics, including some critically important antibiotics, varies across the group yet we manage very similar infections. By working together we can work out what to use in place of these molecules.

In focus

Our team in Italy have reported some data about how our teams use antibiotics in certain conditions and how they use certain molecules. These data enable us to identify opportunities to **reduce**, **refine** and **replace** the use of antibiotics. The results have been published in a separate insert for the Italian team for WAAW 2025 and headlines include:

- Across several conditions there is variation in how frequently antibiotics are used. This is expected and demonstrates contextualisation of use and also shows there are opportunities for change (see graph below about upper respiratory tract infections in cats).
- Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid is the most frequent first choice of antibiotic for most conditions/procedures in cats and dogs. Critically important antibiotics were rarely the antibiotic of choice, with the exception of FLUTD in cats and snuffles in rabbits where enrofloxacin was one of the most common antibiotic choices.



Graph 2: Frequency of administration of antibiotics in the treatment of upper respiratory tract infections in cats.



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“It was very interesting to analyze the results of antibiotic usage in our clinics in 2023. I had the pleasant confirmation that for some aspects, we are acting optimally, e.g., almost never using antibiotics for non-pyretic acute diarrhea in dogs and not frequently using critical and long-acting antibiotics. While on other aspects, a significant dichotomy is noticeable, for other diseases or procedures antibiotic usage is still frequent; I believe these are areas where we can greatly improve. A new survey will be sent out at the beginning of 2026, and the results will be compared with the previous ones. I am very curious to see how our habits have changed in these years!”

Francesca Bresciani, Coordinator of the Italian Scientific Committee

Stakeholder stance

In January 2025 a change in law in Spain meant the way our Spanish teams could dispense antibiotics changed significantly with all but emergency drugs dispensed by pharmacies. In addition all antibiotics used now need to be reported through a government portal. This led to some challenges in antibiotic stewardship and Susana, lead of the Iberian Clinical Board, joined a working group of practitioners, representatives from the universities and the Ministry of Health.



“The working group meet once a month to learn about developments and to organize guidelines on disease management and limiting the use of antibiotics. Depending on the disease, we have divided the working group into subgroups to generate specific guidelines. It's critical that we support the practice teams during these times of change and reserve antibiotics for exceptional cases or, based on the culture results.”

Susana García, VetPartners Scientific Committee for Iberia



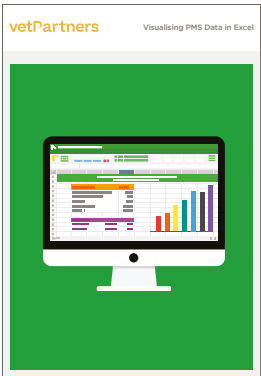
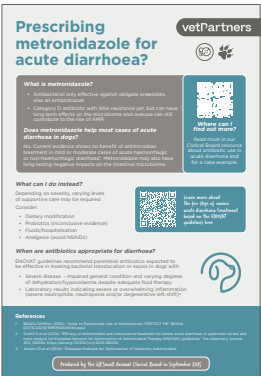
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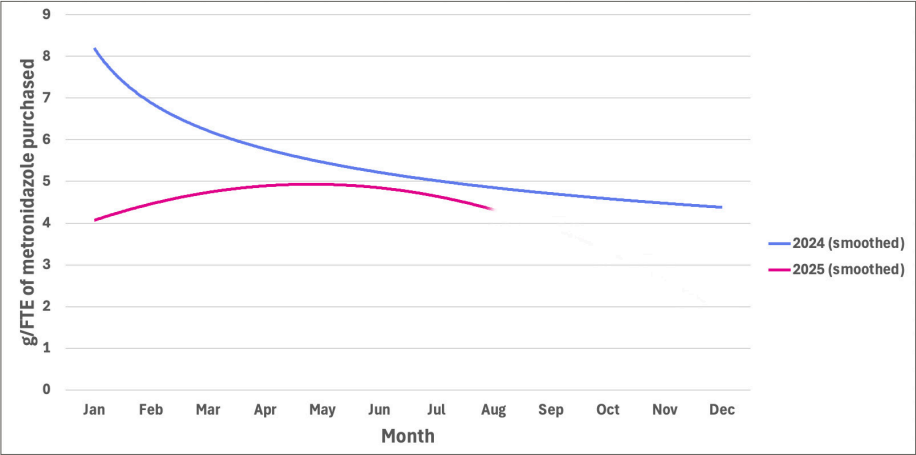
Metronidazole in small animal practice

As part of our WAAW campaign in November 2024 we hosted a meeting for our small animal teams focussed on the use of metronidazole in dogs with diarrhoea. Small Animal Clinical Board member Lucy Graham, a general practitioner with a passion for the responsible use of antibiotics, talked about the challenges of managing these cases. We were joined by Fergus Allerton, an internal medicine specialist at Willows Veterinary Centre, and also a passionate advocate of antimicrobial stewardship and contributor to the PROTECT ME poster, who provided insights and expertise in our live Q&A session.

This work is about **reducing** the use of metronidazole whilst maintaining good clinical outcomes for our patients and clients. As well as the discussion we have produced resources on **VetPartners Learning** for VetPartners colleagues to facilitate discussion, audit and action in our practice teams so they can find their way of contributing to this work.



Overall, 66.39g/FTE small animal vet of metronidazole was purchased during 2024. Between January and August 2024, 49.45g/FTE was purchased, this fell 25.4% to 36.90g/FTE between January and August 2025.



Graph 3: Purchasing of metronidazole across small animal practices between January 2024 and August 2025, measured in grams per full-time equivalent (FTE) vet.

We have reduced our purchasing of metronidazole by 25.4% in one year!



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Big ideas, small steps

Quality Improvement (QI) is all about big ideas on what we want to progress and identifying steps we need to take to move forwards. Many of our teams review their own data at practice level using their practice management systems. It is all the small actions taken in practice that add up to the big changes we can make together. The graph below demonstrates how one small animal practice made a massive reduction in dispensing metronidazole – this is BRILLIANT!



Graph 4: Metronidazole dispensing in a small animal practice from 2022 to 2025.

Quality Improvement is for everyone

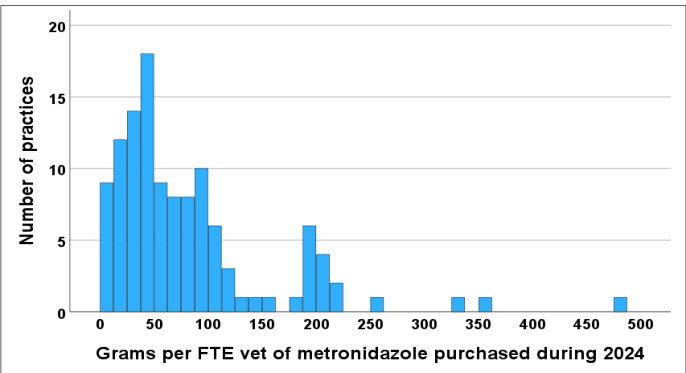
Clinical QI is all about understanding what we do now so we can celebrate progressive practice, protect the present and safeguard the future. Veterinary healthcare and knowledge are evolving all the time and how we use antibiotics is too.



Variation is key

When we practice in an evidence-based way it is critical to understand there are many different ways of managing cases. QI shows the many ways we are doing things and provides some evidence for the many different choices clinicians can make - ensuring clinical freedom and patient centred care.

As a big group we can look at variation in practice and use our data to understand this. Graph 5 shows metronidazole purchased across our UK practices during 2024 and this ranged from 0 to 481.89g/FTE small animal vet (median 57.54g/FTE, IQR 34.22-100.70g/FTE). One medium-sized practice purchased no metronidazole during 2024. Almost half of practices purchased <50g/FTE (53/117; 45.3%) and three quarters (88/117; 75.2%) purchased <100g/FTE.



Graph 5: Variation in purchasing of metronidazole-containing systemic antibiotic products across VetPartners UK small animal practices during 2024, measured in grams per full-time equivalent vet.



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Protecting Critically Important Antibiotics in equine practice

A key aspect of antibiotic stewardship is refining our use of antibiotics. There are certain antibiotics that we particularly need to limit our use of and reserve them for when they are the only molecule indicated - these are the High Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIAs). We need to protect them for our patients now and safeguard our future.

The Equine Clinical Board have undertaken an in-depth audit of antibiotic purchasing data across the UK VetPartners practices using data from the past four years. We focussed on ceftiofur and enrofloxacin as two key Critically Important Antibiotics (CIAs) and we now use a very small amount of these medicines. The purchasing of these HP-CIAs is very low with 9.96g/FTE vet of ceftiofur purchased in 2024, and 28.25g/FTE enrofloxacin.



- We have reduced our purchasing of ceftiofur by 50.1% since 2021!
- We have reduced our purchasing of enrofloxacin by 20.5% since 2021!

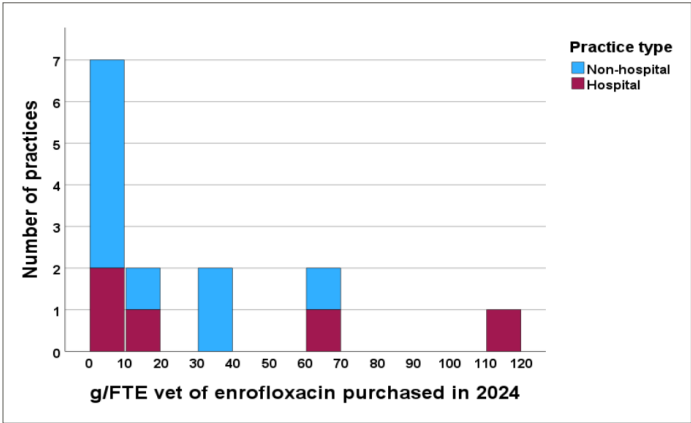


VetPartners colleagues can read the in-depth report on VetPartners Learning [here](#), as well as a resource on the responsible use of enrofloxacin [here](#).



It is important, for animal health and welfare and for human health that these HP-CIAs are available when we need them. It is mostly the more critical patients and those with specific infections who need these medicines. Our data shows that there is appropriate variation between practices, with purchasing higher in hospital settings as would be expected.

Graph 6: Grams/FTE vet of enrofloxacin purchased by individual practices in 2024.



A look at first line antibiotics

Alongside this **reduced** purchasing of HP-CIAs, there has been a continued reduction in the purchasing of trimethoprim/sulfadiazine, with a further 18.6% reduction from 2023 to 2024 (6539.47 to 5326.17g/FTE vet).



We have reduced our purchasing of trimethoprim/sulfadiazine by 46.8% since 2021!



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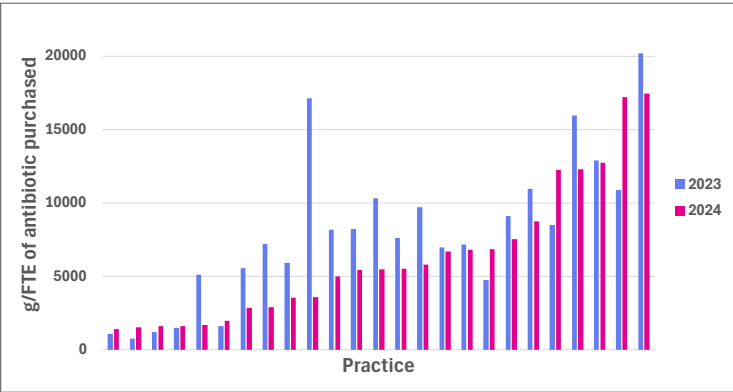
Focussing on welfare in farm animal practice

The farm animal sector has already made advances in antibiotic stewardship with significant reductions in the use of certain antibiotics. We have seen a continued **reduction** across the group. Our antibiotic purchasing fell 13.0% from 7362.87g/FTE farm vet in 2023 to 6409.33g/FTE farm vet in 2024. There is significant variation between our practices as they vary in the types of animals they treat and diseases encountered.

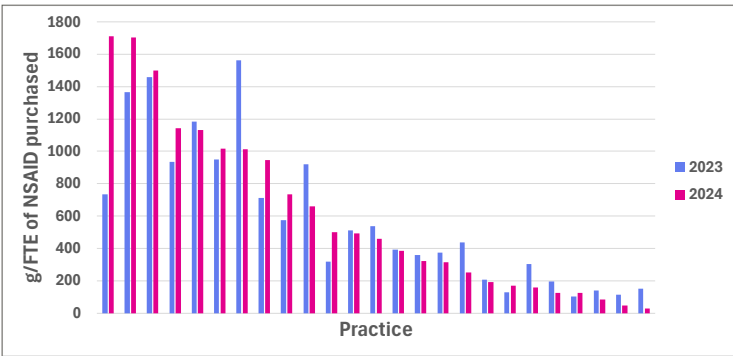


The Farm Animal Clinical Board has been working on increasing awareness of the evidence supporting the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs). NSAIDs are important in managing many conditions and can reduce the need for antibiotics.

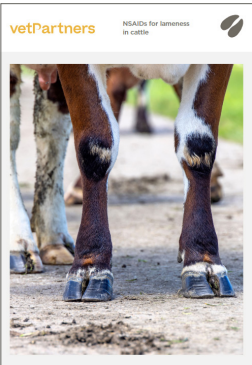
NSAID purchasing in VetPartners rose 4.6% from 555.97g/FTE farm vet in 2023 to 581.62g/FTE farm vet in 2024. Again, we see variation in practice, and we are now working to understand how we can use NSAIDs more effectively in certain conditions.



Graph 7: Variation in the purchasing of systemic antibiotic products for use in farm species, across all VetPartners UK farm and mixed practices during 2023 and 2024, measured in grams per full-time equivalent (FTE) farm vet.



Graph 8: Variation in the purchasing of systemic NSAID products for use in farm species, across all VetPartners UK farm and mixed practices during 2023 and 2024, measured in grams per full-time equivalent (FTE) farm vet.



We have developed multiple resources around NSAID use to support our teams and these can be accessed by VetPartners colleagues on our **learning platform**.



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As part of our antibiotic stewardship activities, we are pleased to be collaborating with other groups across the veterinary profession and beyond to share our work and the work of others.

Whether you are part of the VetPartners team or not, if you are working in this area, interested in our data or are looking for partners passionate about this subject, please get in touch using the contact details shown below.

We are extremely grateful to all those involved in the production of this report and we are proud to have such incredible people working within VetPartners.

We couldn't achieve all that we do without you - thank you all!



Our work in antimicrobial stewardship was recognised in the 2025 RCVS Knowledge Awards, achieving Highly Commended in the Antimicrobial Stewardship category.



Progressing Practice Together

Email: clinical.board@vetpartnersgroup.com

Visit: [VetPartners Group](#), [MyVetPartners](#) or [VetPartners Learning](#) to learn more.

Learn about VetPartners work on other aspects of sustainability [here](#).

