

Rapid reduction of antibiotics 'a danger to animals'

▶▶ Antibiotic use fallen by 40 per cent

By Allstair Driver

A RAPID and uncontrolled reduction in antibiotic usage on farms could seriously damage the health and welfare of livestock, a leading pig vet has warned.

Mark White, who will take up presidency of the Pig Veterinary Society (PVS) in 2017, told an Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF) forum in London on Monday that the pig industry was coming under increasing threat from emerging diseases such as enzootic pneumonia and PRRS.

Mr White, a pig veterinary consultant and past PVS president, said while improvements in housing, husbandry and vaccines could all help, prophylactic use of antibiotics remained essential.

Referring to the recent publication of the O'Neill report and the wider political pressure to address antimicrobial resistance, he said: "If we are not allowed to prevent disease in every which way available, we will have unnecessary, unacceptable suffering.

"To just call, as many are doing, for rapid immediate reductions is dangerous from the animals' point of view."

Mr White's comments prompt-



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MARK WHITE

ed a backlash among vets in the audience, who questioned whether the messages he was sending out could jeopardise public support for the industry.

Tim Morris, a member of Defra's animal health and welfare board, questioned whether the veterinary profession was 'in danger of getting behind the curve on this'.

Move forward

He said: "You have given a nuanced message but societal concerns when babies start dying because of this will be massive, so I am asking, have we got a challenge to move forward and not appear to be putting the brakes on?"

Mr White defended his comments and said farmers and vets 'have to do something and have to be seen to be doing something'.

While some farmers were still not doing enough, most farmers and vets were now using antibiotics responsibly, he said. Internal PVS data suggested use of antibiotics in pigs had fallen by 40 per cent since 2014, he added.

Research boost

SCIENTISTS from the University of Bristol have been awarded £1.5 million to carry out research on antibiotic resistance (AMR) in animals and the risks it poses to humans.

The project aims to test whether AMR bacteria from cattle cause drug resistant infections in humans.