



## **VetTeamAMR: Engaging with the Medicine Hub and how using SMART goals to improve antimicrobial use**

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RCVS Knowledge: Welcome to this VetTeamAMR podcast from RCVS Knowledge, leading responsible antimicrobial use in farm, companion, and equine teams.

Lucy Coyne: Hi. I'm Lucy Coyne, and I'm the project manager of VetTeamAMR at RCVS Knowledge. And I'm pleased to welcome today, Rose Willis, who's going to share some of her exciting activities around engaging her veterinary team and farmers in the Medicine Hub.

Morning Rose, it's lovely to have you with us this morning. Can I start by just asking you to give us a little bit of an introduction about yourself and a little bit around what made you so interested and proactive around the Medicine Hub?

Rose Willis: I've been Clinical Vet for 16 years now. I graduated from London back in 2006, and went into, after a brief stint, small animal locuming. I moved into farm animal work. Antibiotics and their use has always been quite high up my priority list. So, when I was a new graduate, I remember that a small animal partner commented that I still made him money, even though I didn't prescribe antibiotics to every dog and cat, as it was back then.

Then, obviously we started doing the Medicine's Yearly Reviews. Once I saw the Medicine's Hub coming out, I thought that was a fantastic idea. Because it really annoys me, being married to a farmer, that they don't get enough credit for some of the work they do.

The Medicine's Hub seemed a way, that once we had more centrally recorded data, that we'd be able to track and show the progress that they've made to the general public a lot better. Apart from the goals of obviously responsibly using antibiotics and reducing use.

Lucy Coyne: Yeah, you actually found that you thought that the Medicine Hub was a really fantastic opportunity for farmers to actually show their success and what they were doing. Yeah, do you want to tell us a bit more about that and the medicine reviews, perhaps, that you mentioned? Can you explain a bit about what you were already doing before the Medicine Hub?

- Rose Willis: We were using the... It's the Nottingham calculator, isn't it, to produce our yearly reports, which a lot of our farmers, well, the dairy farmers, have been really responsive to reducing their antibiotic use and cutting out the high-priority critically important antibiotics, which is fantastic.
- When I left the practice, we didn't even keep it on the shelf anymore. Although, I did a lot of the reviews, I didn't have an easy way of comparing farms or seeing what they ... Not so easy to track their progress as the Medicine's Hub allows.
- The Medicine's Hub will allow those farmers that have already done very good work to build on that. Particularly with the classification of Class C and D antibiotics that you can see so clearly in the Medicine Hub reports.
- And when I've got a lot of the data into the Medicine's Hub this year, most of our farms are very low end, and it's highlighted those farms where due to certain practices, their antibiotic use is still vastly higher than we would like. But now we can do something to tackle that.
- Lucy Coyne: Brilliant. Thank you. That's really interesting. It shows how you were already doing as much as possible with what was available, and Medicine Hub's just given you another opportunity. I know you said the dairy farmers were generally a bit more engaged. How have you got engagement from other farmers, as well, and got them interested in the Medicine Hub?
- Rose Willis: So to get farmers to engage, I did use a loophole in that I signed a lot of the farmers up myself, with their permission. So, they all gave verbal permission. Obviously, the test goes, dairy farmers didn't really have a choice, but they have all liked the new system. And then, whenever I did an antibiotic review, as part of herd health planning, then I would ask them, "Come, I'll sign you up to the Medicine's Hub," at the same time. And any medicine's meetings I've done, the Red Tractor, then I have explained to them why I think the medicines have been useful. Playing on the fact that it allows centrally recorded data, which then allows them to show how much progress they make and how little antibiotics so many herds and flocks use. And kind of promote that.
- So, I've played on the really good points. And most of them, no one said no and they've all been keen to sign up. And especially when you then show them the reports, most of them are engaged and interested in.
- Lucy Coyne: Fantastic. And how about, you said that you took the lead on this a bit. How did that work with colleagues in your practice team? And was there anybody that needed a bit more convincing than others?
- Rose Willis: No. The clinical director was on board, quite happy for me to take the lead on the project as it were. So by the time, between December and May, I got 39 forms signed up, and split across beef, dairy, and sheep. All the diary ones that I

put on, I had then done antibiotic reviews for 20, 21. And so we've already got that years bank of data on there.

We also are doing a bureau service, whereby drugs are bought on at the point of sale, or within a week of sale. We're aiming for. So, that it's a lot easier to do reviews at the end of the year. And I think that appealed to farmers as time-

Lucy Coyne: Sorry, is that at practice level you're actually putting the sold drugs on?

Rose Willis: Yes. We're putting them into that total medicine usage and then farmers have the option. They can use the database as a full medicine's book. But most of them, have just gone through it, tracking total medicine usage.

The team were, I think they were all on board. And since they left, I know they've continued. They've got a few more farms signed up. There's a Sheep Flock Health Club now as well. And they've all been encouraged to sign up. So that we've got a better database and then we'll be able to do benchmarking. And I think farmers all quite like that as well.

Lucy Coyne: You said you've got verbal consent from farmers to sign them up or encourage them to sign up. Is that something that you've just approached to every visit, every phone call, and that kind of thing? Or have you targeted ways or discussed that?

Rose Willis: Almost. I would say every phone call or visit. I always talk a lot to farmers. I know how they work, being married to one. Yes, my approach is always explain everything and try and educate them, but don't necessarily give them the option to say no.

Yeah, so if any visit or meeting, where we're discussing herd health or antibiotics, I would explain about Medicine's Hub and ask, "Can I sign you up to it?"

Lucy Coyne: Fantastic. So, it's just a case of being the broken record and repeatedly saying-

Rose Willis: Yes.

Lucy Coyne: ... How fantastic you think it is? And what feedback have got from farmers that potentially weren't as engaged before but are now submitting data to the Medicine Hub?

Rose Willis: I've been surprised how many... A lot of our sheep farms aren't necessarily Red Tractor, but all of them have been keen to sign up. Even though, they haven't had too. And we've got beef farmers on there that also aren't Red Tractors. So we are getting engagement from farmers where it's not compulsory yet to submit an antibiotic review.

And I think often, they realize how little or how targeted their use is. And yeah, it's making sure they know how they fit into the bigger picture and how important that is. The last meetings I've done, I changed how the medicine's meetings worked a bit and added a section at the end that was more practical. And then, yeah, if we've done health meetings, is targeting them a bit better about responsible use and how they can reduce that without not treating the things that need treated.

Lucy Coyne: Oh, brilliant. It all comes down to communication then?

Rose Willis: Yes. I did a meeting on lamb health. And so I based that around the plan, prevent, protect route. I went through each disease and we went through all the different strands of that. And then the medicine's meeting at the end, I split them into what the key areas for antibiotic use are for that sector. And does it actually need antibiotics and how they can reduce normally at the detriment of our farm.

A particular one I've used, the medicines, is if you walk onto our farms it is a mess. It's not the cleanest of farms. It's not a picture, postcard farm, yet. My husband's running 280 dairy cows. Over 200 followers on very, very low antibiotic use. And that's a reflection of the good management, and staying on top of his nutrition, and the whole picture. Yeah, most farmers have found that amusing but I think that the point that I was trying to make, you know everything plays into health, and it's the whole approach that they need to look at.

Lucy Coyne: Do you think using antidotes and things from your experience of your farm or as a Vet it might be other farms that they visited and worked with. Do you think that's really helpful in those conversations with farmers?

Rose Willis: It certainly works for me. I've done a lot of work with TB and as well. Yeah, bringing in the personal experiences really helps in those situations, as well. And quite often now, I don't use the antidote that when I graduated, all the new antibiotics were coming out, where also and now they are all going out again, and we're back to using what would have been around when I graduated. So, I've done the whole circle.

Lucy Coyne: The full circle.

Rose Willis: Yeah. So a few years ago, I used an example of a colleague, who retired, and now I am the example. I think farmer's find that interesting and helpful, as well, to know that the Vets have had to change and reject how we work to get the same results that we've been used to getting from the different antibiotics.

Lucy Coyne: Brilliant. In terms of these conversations around responsible use in the Medicine Hub, what are the biggest challenges that you've overcome in conversations with both veterinary practice colleagues, as well as farmers?

Rose Willis: I think the challenges with colleagues are that looking at treatment protocols. So, gentle, what the Sheep veterinary Association advise is not what a lot of colleagues would use. And it's trying to change that and making sure we know why we're changing it. And trying to make it a clear approach. So that if the farmer is requesting antibiotics or something, whichever that they speak to or see, we are prescribing the same first line treatments. So that they don't gossip at market amongst themselves and trying to standardize what we would use as a first line.

Lucy Coyne: Is that kind of a cross you'll practice presumably?

Rose Willis: Yes. We did protocols last year for joint heel and then obviously, the other one was watery mouth to the degree that we put together a protocol and information sheet for farmers. And then all of a sudden, we got some of the drug that doesn't exist anymore, to the degree that by that point, we put in all the footwork with the farmers, and we actually sent our allocation back. Because we didn't want to do a u-turn, and then dispense to some farmers, and send out mix messages.

And actually, it all went fine. We didn't have complaints during farming season that they hadn't been able to access that. And it was good getting them thinking about what else should they be doing. So I think it's uniting as a team and trying to send out the same message across the board to all farmers, because they do talk a lot.

Lucy Coyne: Brilliant. Obviously, thinking around a lot of the things you've done, it sounds like you've very much taken as a lead and taken your colleagues with you on the journey. And just thinking around should you have had the Smart Goal Tool available, I just wondered if you got any ideas of smart goals. So specific, measurable, obtainable, realistic, and time-bound goals. And I just wondered whether you got any thoughts around any smart goals that might help to support other practices that want to follow some of your advice, and look at how they can engage with the Medicine Hub, and encourage farmers to engage.

Rose Willis: So, I suppose one goal would be every time that you do a Medicine's Review, because a lot farms are on yearly reviews now, is to sign them up to the Medicine's Hub. And then that makes your workload slightly less. At one point, I did have the goal of getting everyone signed up and it was going to be a knock down, not a knocked in. But that was going to be far too much paperwork. So, in the end I went for whenever we did a review, get them signed up.

Lucy Coyne: So that's fact. That's how you've thought about actually how that's realistic. You've got one aspiration but it's just not going to be feasible. So, how can you make it realistic. You can do that by every conversation you have with farms and medicine review. Mentioning the Medicine Hub and encouraging signup.

Rose Willis:

Yeah. Another goal would be to then take your Category C and see what other protocol you can come up with. For example the Endometritis in cows. Obviously, what we would try to use is a Category C. So, it's coming up with a protocol that you're all on board with as a team. As to how you can reduce... We looked at trying to reduce those infections. So that if we did have to treat, we're treating less and we would reduce the amount of antibiotic we use that way, rather than just going in with a blanket change. Because there aren't that many options for treating.

Yeah, that would be another goal is choosing your protocols and thinking how they can change and how you can explain to farmer's clearly why you've made that change and why you're advising what you are now.

With the dairy farms, obviously, the big advantage of light of the hub is that I can see all of them at once, from one dashboard, and there is a lot of metrics you can pull out of it, and that's been most useful because I've uploaded last year's data, as well, which takes time. It's a lot quicker once you get use to it but that's another good goal to add is to slowly... When you do one review, to backdate the data so that you can easily compare. Because it goes calendar year as well.

Yes. So, Medicine's Hub, as well, you can anti-inflammatory and vaccine use as well. So, I've uploaded that for all farmers as well. Obviously, it may be a bit incomplete, the vaccines, because as a practice, we can't put on, or we couldn't put on what they bought from animal suppliers. But for anti-inflammatory, I thought that's also been an important part of my message that A, your antibiotic usage is low, but you've also used enough anti-inflammatories as well. You're using those appropriately because that's another book there of mine. Yes, it's looking at the whole picture, not just at the antibiotics.

Lucy Coyne:

Brilliant. I think some really, really interesting stuff. Lots to make us think about it. It's all around this big picture and not just thinking about the Medicine Hub in isolation but actually how it fits in the whole herd health and farm environment.

And can I just ask one question around you were talking about the logistics of it. Do you have members of the veterinary Practice Team that have been particularly supportive and administrative or engaging farmers? Just to see if there are any tips for others from that.

Rose Willis:

So, we have had one member of the office team that is now responsible for uploading that data. And so, I did it all to start with and then when I left, I passed it over so that she's in charge of the database. And then slowly, the rest of the vets came on board as well. It just takes times to get use to something new. But once you've seen how it works, it's worth the time input to get the output that you get, in my opinion. And going forward, I think it's going to be great to have the central database to be able to push the media messages that actually, we have a venue and look how great we're doing compared to some

other countries. And how much farmers have been responsible, and done what they can to change the resistance issues, and step up to the mark.

Lucy Coyne: Brilliant, Rose. I think that's a really nice place to finish on. I'm thinking that actually-

Rose Willis: Not sure that answered the question, but anyway.

Lucy Coyne: No, but I think that was a really nice message around the Medicine Hub, offers farmers an opportunity to actually see all the progress they have made.

Rose Willis: Yeah.

Lucy Coyne: And to actually use it as a way to work with their vet to try and even make more improvements. Apply the Farm Vet Champions plan, prevent, protect. And I think you've given us three examples of fantastic smart goals as well that can help support others if they want to really engage and get that whole practice team and the farming clients to engage with Medicine Hub.

Rose Willis: Thank you.

Lucy Coyne: Well, thank you very much. Thanks for your time, Rose. Thank you.

Rose Willis: Nope, that's okay.

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