

Core metrics for antimicrobial usage in the Scottish sheep sector



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Introduction

Appropriate antimicrobial usage (AMU) is fundamental to address the global challenge of AMR, while maintaining animal health and welfare. The recording of relevant metrics is necessary to measure and monitor AMU over time. In 2019, the Sheep Antibiotic Guardian Group published a set of flock-level core metrics¹ for AMU. If recorded, these could be used for flock-level benchmarking and to estimate the metrics needed to meet national reporting requirements.

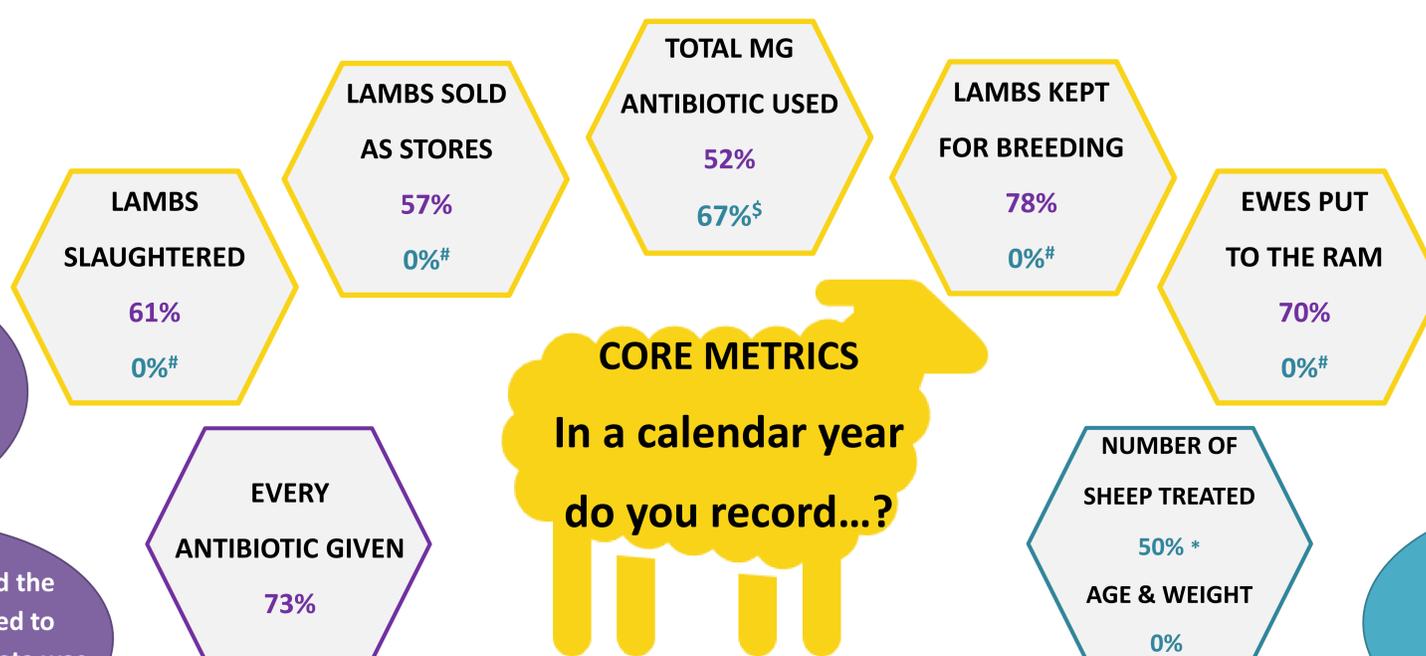
In 2020, we explored whether these core metrics were being recorded by Scottish sheep farmers and vets.

Methods

- One questionnaire distributed to sheep farmers via social media
- One questionnaire emailed directly to veterinary practices providing livestock clinical services.
- Follow-up phone conversations with vets who responded to the survey.
 - Current practice around antimicrobial prescribing and recording for sheep clients
 - Perceived barriers in relation to future AMU recording requirements.

Response & Results

SURVEYS: 23 Scottish sheep farmers and 6 Scottish veterinary practices responded. Their responses are summarised below.



The percentage of respondents to each survey who indicated that they **did** record each type of metric.

*50% of vets stated the practice **sometimes** recorded the number of sheep treated with each antibiotic prescription.

§Vets were asked if they recorded **total quantity** of antibiotic. Additional recording or data processing is required to report total mg/calendar year.

#83% of vets stated they could obtain this information.



FOLLOW-UP CALLS: 5 vets participated

- Engaging certain clients remains a significant challenge.
- The drive to improve and utilise data must come from the client.
- Details may be lost during telephone or "over-the-counter" sales.
- Electronic recording systems can be a huge barrier to some clients.
- Practice software systems allow for separate sheep accounts – these should be used.
- Vet instructions don't always carry through to what happens on-farm.
- Economic justification can encourage client action.
- Many practices collate AMU info for dairy clients; could do the same for sheep.

Conclusions

Some of the required data are already being recorded or could be obtained.

The low response rate was a limitation of this study.

Both farmers and vets will need to be supported in providing data in the required format at the required frequency.

The vets agreed that practices can play a role in AMU recording, but most felt that this would be supplementary to information provided by the farmer.

Clear, simple messaging will be **essential** to acquire the correct AMU metric.

References

1. Sheep-AMU-Metric-document_version-1.0_17Jul19.pdf (windows.net)

Acknowledgements

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Further information on this work is available from the presenting author.