

Antibiotics in farming major threat to human health

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

Complete these sentences, then discuss your answers.

1. Antibiotics are used to treat ...
2. They do not work for ...
3. Before we had antibiotics, ...

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then, find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.

excess

drugs

overuse

resistance

report

1. very frequent use of something so that it stops working _____ (para 1)
2. the ability not to be affected by something _____ (para 1)
3. another word for *medicines* _____ (para 1)
4. a written account that gives information about a particular subject _____ (para 2)
5. a larger amount of something than is necessary _____ (para 4)

common

warn

residues

routine

waste

6. the parts of something that remain after the rest has gone _____ (para 5)
7. the useless materials or substances that are left after you use something _____ (para 6)
8. happening often _____ (para 6)
9. the usual way of doing things _____ (para 8)
10. tell someone that something bad will happen if they do something _____ (para 10)

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Overuse of antibiotics in farming is a major new threat to human health, says UN

Fiona Harvey

5 December, 2017

- 1 The overuse of antibiotics in farming is one of the biggest dangers to human health. It increases resistance to very important drugs and puts millions of lives in danger.
- 2 Antibiotics used on farms are often washed into the environment and can create resistance to the drugs across a big area, according to a report from the UN.
- 3 This is making even the most powerful antibiotics, which are used when other antibiotics don't work, stop working in humans. Medicines that enter the environment from farms are increasing resistance to antibiotics.
- 4 When antibiotics are used on farm animals, they are often put in the animals' food and water. But this can mean that farmers use too much and the excess is washed into fields or rivers. Antibiotics then collect in the natural environment.
- 5 Because of this, according to the UN report, "the natural environment collects antibiotic residues that increase resistance".
- 6 In the report, scientists describe some of their most important findings on environmental problems. "Around the world, waste from cities, farming and factories is washed into the environment so it is common to find antibiotic residues in many rivers and in the ground. This is causing resistant bacteria to grow."
- 7 William Gaze from the University of Exeter, who helped to write the report, said, "So far, a lot of attention has focused on reducing antibiotic use and that is very important. But it's equally important to understand more about how resistance is spread through our natural environments so that we can find ways to stop that from happening."
- 8 These ways could include stricter rules on how the drugs are made so residues are not washed away in waste water. There could also be rules to stop the routine use of antibiotics in farming – in many parts of the world, antibiotics are used to make animals put on weight faster and not to treat illnesses.
- 9 The World Health Organization (WHO) wants to see similar actions and has asked governments to make sure that the most powerful antibiotics used in human health are kept for humans and never used on farm animals. This is unpopular with farmers because, if they can't use these powerful antibiotics, they may have to kill animals instead. But, according to the WHO, it would make a big difference and stop resistance to the most important drugs.
- 10 Resistance to antibiotics is now one of the biggest dangers to human health. England's Chief Medical Officer, Dame Sally Davies, has often warned that it could mean that simple operations such as hip replacements will become life-threatening within a few years, if resistance cannot be stopped.

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3 Summarizing the article

Use some of the key words from task 2 to complete the summary.

1. According to a UN report, the _____ of antibiotics on farm animals is a big problem.
2. _____ water from farms washes _____ antibiotics into rivers and the ground.
3. These antibiotic _____ encourage resistant bacteria to grow.
4. _____ to antibiotics is one of the biggest dangers to human health.
5. There should be rules to stop the _____ use of antibiotics in farming.
6. The WHO wants governments to make sure that our most powerful _____ are only used on humans and not on farm animals.

4 Phrases

a. Find these phrases in the article and underline them.

1. puts millions of lives in danger
2. according to
3. increase resistance
4. attention has focused on

b. Notice how they are used. Then, use them in sentences of your own about the article.

5 Discussion

- Where you live or come from, ...
 - is it easy to get antibiotics?
 - how often do most people take antibiotics?
- What did you know about the problems of antibiotic resistance before you read this article?
- What can you do to make sure you do not make the problem worse?

6 Antibiotic resistance – group task

Do one of the following.

Design a poster to give people information.

or

Draw an infographic to show the problem and its consequences.

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KEY

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(possible answers)

1. ... bacterial infections.
2. ... viral infections.
3. ... even simple bacterial infections often killed people.

2 Key words

1. overuse
2. resistance
3. drugs
4. report
5. excess
6. residues
7. waste
8. common
9. routine
10. warn

3 Summarizing the article

1. overuse
2. waste; excess
3. residues
4. resistance
5. routine
6. drugs