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NZ strengthens focus on antimicrobial resistance

November 18, 2021 | News

A range of New Zealand scientists, healthcare professionals and organisations are helping spread awareness about the threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR)



The Ministry of Health and Ministry for Primary Industries support the 'One Health' approach to spread awareness during World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, which runs from 18-24 November, every year. The theme for this year is 'Spread Awareness, Stop Resistance'

"A key thing to remember is that an individual person won't develop resistance to antibiotics. The resistance develops in the bugs themselves, so over time we need to reduce the overall use of antibiotics in the wider community because this is a main driver of resistance," says the Ministry of Health's Chief Science Advisor Dr Ian Town.

"COVID-19 has made us all very aware of the need to look after ourselves, to keep washing our hands and to stay at home if you're not well. These actions also help reduce the spread of resistant bugs," says Dr Town.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) works alongside the Ministry of Health to promote antimicrobial resistance awareness by working with manufacturers, vets, farm industry organisations and horticulture sectors.

The Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, Professor Dame Juliet Gerrard's major project for 2021 is on infectious disease, with a particular focus on drug-resistant infections (antimicrobial resistance).

"We've put together a fantastic expert panel which includes all sorts of different scientists, researchers and clinicians from all around New Zealand and we're pulling together some recommendations to make sure we use antibiotics and other medicines wisely and make sure that they keep working into the future," Juliet Gerrard says.

The panel is expected to provide its advice to the Government in the coming weeks.