

Livestock agency imposes controls for veterinarians for 'last-resort antibiotic'

PUNNEE AMORNVIPUTPANICH
THE NATION

THE LIVESTOCK Development Department (LDD) is imposing strict controls on the use of colistin, or the "antibiotic of last resort", on farm pigs in order to prevent deadly bacteria from developing resistance to antibiotics.

On February 8, the department issued a five-point order on the use of colistin to the Thai Swine Veterinary Association (TSVA) after it was reported that farmers in Nakhon Pathom and Suphan Buri provinces had been feeding the antibiotic to pigs.

According to the department, veterinarians across the country must adhere to the following guidelines when using colistin, which can only be used to treat diarrhoea:

- It cannot be used to prevent disease.

- It can only be used when all other antibiotics fail in treating a sick animal.

- The provincial Livestock Development Office must be informed when colistin is used on

farm animals.

- Veterinarians in charge of supervising farms must check animal feed to ensure it is not laced with colistin and have the feed checked in a lab periodically.

- The department will send officials to farms for random checks to see if colistin is being used, and if rules are breached, farm veterinarians could have their licences suspended or revoked.

LDD deputy chief Sorawit Thanito said that after China discovered MCR-1, a gene with a mobilised colistin resistance, in 2015, the department issued nine urgent letters to related associations, including the Food and Drug Administration, to declare colistin as a controlled medication and to have the sale of the antibiotic dropped by 70 per cent.

"The [five-point] order will also help control the use of colistin because some 70 per cent of farm pigs in Thailand are being raised under the supervision of veterinarians," he added.

Sorawit said the department's move was to ensure the drug was being used correctly.

TSVA president Pramote Tanrawat said he would distribute the five-point order to the 800 members of the association. He also called on the Public Health Ministry to ensure that colistin cannot be bought over the counter, which would allow farmers to bypass veterinarians in their use of the antibiotic.

The colistin-resistant gene was reportedly found in pigs, chicken and humans in 16 countries including Thailand from 2010 to 2015.