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COMMENT

Paris' pachyderms

CONVICTED drink-driver Paris Hilton has announced that she plans to save suicidal drunken elephants from killing themselves on electric cables.

In a move equivalent to Keith Richards lecturing Pete Doherty on the ills of taking drugs, the hotel heiress has taken it upon herself to steer the elephants down the right path. Miss Hilton has reacted to a spiral of publicity after six elephants electrocuted themselves during a rice-beer fuelled rampage through a village near Chandan Nukat, India.

She reportedly said: "The elephants get drunk all the time. It is becoming really dangerous. We need to stop making alcohol available to them."

Three years ago, four other elephants were electrocuted after a similar drunken escape in the same area, suggesting elephants do forget after all – after a few drinks, at least.

Local conservationists have praised villagers for their brave and swift action, which limited the damage caused by the 40-strong herd. As well as hurting themselves, the pie-eyed pachyderms have caused a number of hangovers for villagers across the north-eastern state of Assam, by causing the deaths of 600 people in the area, plundering granaries and tearing apart homes. Human expansion has severely cut their habitat and food supply, leading to the giant mammals stealing from their human neighbours.

With Miss Hilton's natural flair for creating publicity, she may be the perfect person to raise awareness and make sure this is the elephant's last tango in... Chandan Nukat. **VT**

QUEST FOR GUIDELINES TO AVOID ANTIBIOTIC MISUSE

report by
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OFFICIAL written guidelines must be issued to ensure that antibiotics licensed for humans are used appropriately when they are administered to companion animals, it is claimed.

The Bella Moss Foundation (BMF) – which supports and promotes new research on MRSA and other serious infections affecting companion animals – claims no such guidance is available from veterinary associations and drug companies.

It is particularly worried about human antibiotic use in animals following cases of incorrect administration, and it has concerns about microbial resistance and "complacent" use by vets.

Under the prescribing cascade, human antimicrobials can be used to treat animals if no authorised UK product is available for the condition in that particular species, or if "off-label" use of a product authorised for the same condition in

another species, or a different condition in the same species, is not possible.

The foundation claims it is aware of several cases in which vancomycin has been administered incorrectly to animals. In one case, it was given orally to a dog in an unsuccessful effort to treat a wound, which led to adverse side effects.

BMF founder Jill Moss told *Veterinary Times*: "The whole thing started with an American pet owner whose dog developed a strain of *Staphylococcus aureus* that was resistant to everything. The vet tried vancomycin and the dog got worse."

Ms Moss referred the owner's query to the foundation's US veterinary advisors, Scott Weese and Andrew Hillier. She explained: "[The advisors] said that you cannot administer this drug orally for non-gastrointestinal infections because it will not be adequately absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract and may cause all sorts of problems. It has to be injected intravenously to reach the site of the infection."

Although Ms Moss originally thought the problem was isolated to this case, she discovered other similar situations had been encountered in the UK.

She said: "When it comes to treating resistant strains of bacteria, veterinary profession-

als should be cautious before using some of the drugs without training in the correct mode of administration. I would like to see written guidelines introduced for vets who are using a licensed product designed for humans, because the drug companies offer no support or advice [about their use in animals]."

Dr Hillier chairs a committee of the American College of Veterinary Dermatology, which has been charged with generating guidelines for skin and ear bacterial infections.

He said: "I think the best way to approach this is to have accessible, practical guidelines for veterinarians for appropriate use of antibiotics. [The committee] plans to publish a full report, as well as have an easy-reference, one or two-page summary for veterinarians that is widely distributed, easily accessible and practical for everyday use."

Having raised the issue with both the VMD and the DEFRA Antimicrobial Resistance Coordination's MRSA subgroup, Ms *continued overleaf*



Jill Moss: caution is needed when using some drugs without specific guidance.



John FitzGerald, of the VMD: "It's about good information being available to the right people."

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