

LUNCH WITH THE FT – BAN KI-MOON

# ‘I’m an easy scapegoat’

By Gillian Tett

The head of the United Nations glides silently into a waiting room at the organization’s New York headquarters wearing a somber dark blue suit, a white shirt and a pale blue tie with a UN tie clip. Ban Ki-moon, 71, has just been on the phone to British prime minister David Cameron, pleading with him, “as an important leader of Europe”, to take more refugees from Syria.

It is a topic close to Ban’s heart. Sixty-five years ago, as a child in Korea, he was forced to leave home when his village was sucked into the country’s brutal war. Ever since, he has felt a particularly strong affinity with victims of violence.

“I was six years old,” he recalls. “I had to flee with things on my back. It was big difficulty finding something to eat. I was always crying, crying, crying, without knowing what was going on. All the schools were destroyed. We were just sitting under the shadow of a tree, on the ground.”

He looks me in the eye. “I was not really refugee,” he adds, speaking with the precision of someone who has spent hours studying legal definitions. “I was displaced person. But for us the United Nations flag was the protector.”

The Korean peninsula was the first place in the world where UN peacekeepers, wearing their distinctive blue helmets, intervened to protect civilians. As a child, Ban idealized the United Nations - set up after the devastation of the second world war - as “a beacon!” But today, as it prepares to host its 70th General Assembly, pulling together representatives from all of its 193 countries, the organization seems less beacon and more behemoth, and Ban, its secretary-general since 2007, has learned the cruel limits of political power.

The UN can still help deliver good; Ban has been pushing European leaders to face up to the Syrian refugee crisis. “Cameron told me that the UK would take 20,000 more,” he says. “I also called Angela Merkel, François Hollande - everyone!”

But the organization has become a sprawling mess: it has 15 specialized agencies, 12 different funds, and a secretariat that employs more than 40,000 people, costing USD5.5bn in 2014-15. To complicate matters, all members have an equal vote on issues - and the five members of the “security council” that serves



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

as the UN’s inner sanctum (US, China, Russia, France and Britain) have a veto over decisions. That leaves the institution mired in gridlock.

The question that hovers over the UN as it faces its big birthday is whether it has now outlived its purpose. Does Ban have an utterly hopeless job? He gestures for me to follow him into the place on the top floor of the UN skyscraper that he has chosen for our lunch: a small official dining room, decorated in a bland corporate style with pale wooden walls. There is a stunning view of the Manhattan skyline but the only decoration of note is a gigantic blue UN flag.

“Time is very limited,” he says, apologizing for his choice of location. “I am dealing with 193 nations, and civil society and business community. There are almost unlimited actors who I have to have harmonious relations with.”

Waiters silently appear and present our first courses on white bone china plates with a blue UN logo. Before the meal, I was asked - in accordance with UN protocol - to complete a form indicating what I wanted to eat. I notice Ban has chosen the same starter as me: a smoked salmon and avocado salad. “I followed you,” he says, impassively.

I start by asking why he wanted to take on such a huge job. Suddenly, Ban’s polite expression becomes truly animated. He explains how, after his family escaped to the city of Cheongju, he eventually got an education. “Unesco and Unicef were providing a lot of humanitarian support - textbooks, toys and pencils and stationaries,” he says, waving his hands in the air; a non-native English speaker, he often uses gestures to communicate.

He finished top of his school and, at the age of 17, was se-

lected by the Red Cross to join a 100-strong peace-building delegation to the US of children from around the world. That took him to the White House, where he met US president John F Kennedy. “At that time it was the height of the cold war,” Ban recalls. “But I remember that President Kennedy told us: ‘Although governments are not getting along well, you young people can be good friends - there are no national boundaries.’”

The experience left Ban determined to become a diplomat. “[My country] was so poor I was thinking that public service should be the right thing.” Over the next four decades he worked on missions from India to Austria, studied at Harvard’s Kennedy School and then ended up, in 2004, as South Korea’s foreign minister. Generally he avoided controversy; his nickname among Korean diplomats was “the slippery eel”.

His most startling manoeuvre came in 2006, when the term of the previous UN secretary-general - the charismatic Ghanaian Kofi Annan - ended. Ban unexpectedly threw his hat into the ring. His profile was low, his chances looked equally so, but he tirelessly visited all the key stakeholders. “Frankly speaking, I didn’t think that one day I could become secretary-general until very, very late,” he admits.

Has the job been what he hoped? He smiles politely. “I know there is the question of whether, after 70 years, the UN is relevant and properly effective,” he says. “The UN is quite different from what it was 70 years - or even 20 years - ago. The number of members has increased and there is a dramatic increase in communications and technology and migration. And there has been much more individualistic way of thinking and doing business by each and every member state.” What does he think he has achieved? “It is very difficult for me to say something about me. It should be historians and scholars who say it.”

I groan inwardly. Some colleagues claim that Ban’s “quiet Confucian” style is exactly what is needed to orchestrate deals in a deeply fractured world; critics retort that his approach is too consensus-oriented and uncharismatic to get anything done. Either way, I have rarely encountered anyone as self-effacing in New York.

I push him again to talk about his record. He pauses, then explains that he has tried to clean up the operations of the UN. Annan’s tenure was hit by scandals such as the “Oil-for-Food” saga, which surrounded a UN program to aid suffering Iraqis and exposed deep managerial weaknesses. Ban has forced all senior UN officials to reveal their financial assets, implemented performance reviews, and recently even took the rare step of firing somebody (Babacar Gaye, the former head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, whose troops were accused of sexual assault).

What about influence in the wider world? Climate change, he offers finally. “When I came here in January 2007 the climate change was not really very much appreciated or understood. So as a way to raise awareness I travelled to all the places of the world, from Antarctica and then the Arctic.” Carefully, he lists his trips, thanking different governments for their assistance, taking care to not mix up their names.

“When I went to the Arctic I got full support from the Norwegian government - we took an aeroplane and then ice-break-

ing ship for 11 hours overnight. The thickness of the ice they had to hit - boom!” he claps his hands. “Two years ago I went to Greenland first, with prime minister of Denmark Helle Thorning-Schmidt. I saw falling chunks of ice - boom!” He claps again. “It is very important for me to sound alarm bells about climate change.”

Our first course is taken away, and two more identical plates appear with blandly inoffensive piles of sea bream, beans and rice. Ban insists all this talk and travel has yielded results: last year, under UN pressure, the US and China finally signed up to an international climate-change deal and this year the UN will launch an initiative to provide \$100bn of technological assistance to poor countries to help them cut emissions. “But it has been very difficult because governments have been focusing on their narrow national agendas.

“If everything goes wrong, I become an easy scapegoat - we joke that “SG”, or secretary-general, is now standing for scapegoat,” he continues. “I don’t complain about this. But when there is a unity of purpose and solidarity among security council members, particularly the five permanent members, you can make real things.”

When did that unity last appear? “Two years ago,” he sighs. That was when the security council briefly agreed to monitor chemical weapons in Syria. Ban is now imploring the group to take wider action in that country. But, to his disappointment, Russia and China have vetoed this.

What about Iran? This at least seems to be one area of real action: “I know that there is some suspicion that this deal cannot be fully implemented. But based on my own personal experience there is a big difference between the current agreement with Iran and the North Korean nuclear issues,” he insists. “Many sanctions have been lifted but, depending on how the Iranians do, they can be snatched back.”

Isn’t that over-optimistic? He smiles. Our conversation moves on to some of the other geopolitical tensions that place the UN - and Ban - in a near-impossible position. Just before our lunch he attended a military parade in China to mark the end of the second world war. The move incensed the Japanese government but Ban insists the Japanese were wrong to complain. “I have been participating in all commemora-

tive events to be fair and impartial,” he says.

The waiter brings two plates of fruit tart with macaroons, and Ban talks about areas where the UN has been unable to deliver “as much as possible”. “The charter stipulated that we were to save succeeding generations from the scourges of war, But we have seen more wars and recurring genocides,” he says. “There is no other universal organization which has legitimacy and I am quite confident that the United Nations will continue to exist. But it needs to evolve and change.”

How? One way, Ban suggests, would be to change how his successor is selected when his eight-year term ends in 2016. Until now, this has been done in secret by the security council. But some members want an open vote among all 193 countries. Ban supports this. “After 70 years there should be more transparency. I also think it is high time to have some woman of integrity and experience.”

Ban lives in New York with Soon-taek, his wife of more than 40 years - they have three grown-up children - but spends so much of his life in meetings, or on planes travelling to different disaster zones or diplomatic hotspots, that he almost never gets a day off. What will he do when he leaves, I ask as coffee arrives - might he run for president of South Korea? “I am too busy doing my work here to think of anything else,” he says, as I groan silently once more.

Before we end I ask what gives him most satisfaction in his role. Quietly, he reveals that he gets some sense of fulfilment from visiting refugee camps. That is partly because he is trying to exercise his “power of persuasion” to encourage governments to treat refugees well. But he also wants to spread a personal message about resilience - and finding hope in some unlikely places.

“When I go to camps - and I have just been to Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Somalia, Nigeria and other places I cannot name - I always tell the young people, ‘Don’t despair!’” he says, looking animated again. “I say, ‘I was like you at one time. But the boy that I was has become the secretary-general. Don’t despair!’”

Gillian Tett is the FT’s US managing editor

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“ There is no other universal organization which has legitimacy

BAN KI-MOON



FT BIG READ

# UK health care - On life support

By Sarah Neville

Addenbrooke's is one of Britain's most renowned teaching hospitals, its credentials burnished by the world-leading research into global ills that takes place on its Cambridge campus. To the tens of thousands who each year receive treatment on its wards, or benefit from its medical breakthroughs, it represents the very best of Britain's taxpayer-funded National Health Service.

But last January it was forced to take the unprecedented step, along with almost 20 other UK hospitals, of cancelling all non-urgent operations and appealing to the public to stay away from its emergency department. It has drawn up plans to avoid a repeat this year, but across the NHS the funding pressures that caused that emergency have, if anything, intensified in the past 12 months.

Keith McNeil, speaking before he stepped down this week as the hospital's chief executive, described January's measure as a "tipping point" in the battle to meet patient demand in the UK.

It is not a unique picture. Across the developed world, nations are struggling to squeeze more value from fewer resources to keep populations healthy. But the comparatively high proportion of public money spent on the NHS means its travails are more visible than those of many other health systems.

Not simply a health service but a cherished repository of British values - compared to a national religion by one former finance minister - the NHS has long occupied an untouchable status in British life.

Kathleen Thompson, visiting her husband at Addenbrooke's, describes how she underwent a lung operation at nearby Papworth, a centre for heart and lung treatment, confiding that she "wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the NHS". According to the most recent British Social Attitudes survey, support for the NHS stands at its second highest level since the poll began in 1983.

But can the model last? In



1948, when the NHS was born in a flush of postwar collectivism, the biggest drain on its coffers came from single episodes of infectious disease. Now it is foundering under the weight of an ageing population and long-term illnesses caused by poor lifestyles. Diabetes alone consumes around 10 per cent of the NHS's £116bn annual budget.

Carol Bargewell, responsible for managing patient discharges at Addenbrooke's - a process often delayed by a lack of appropriate services in the community, says: "I've seen the average age of my client group just go up and up and up... It used to be unusual to have somebody over the age of 95 - it isn't any more. The acuity [level of patient care] has increased... we're discharging a lot more patients with a lot more mixed health and social care needs."

The NHS has faced crisis before but this one is of a different order. It is estimated that it will have to fill a funding gap of close to £30bn a year by 2020. Financial failure is now deeply embedded across the entire system, afflicting prestigious hospitals and notorious laggards alike with about two-thirds of all UK hospitals forecast to be in the red by April 2016 according to the King's Fund. Their deficits look set to hit more than £2bn by the end of the financial year.

In international terms, the NHS is not a high spender. It sits around the middle of the league table among OECD countries, consuming about 9 per cent of gross domestic product. But public expenditure as a share of GDP has shrunk in recent years, radically changing the structure of the welfare state and meaning that health has consumed a bigger share of a dwindling pot. Health, education and social security combined now swallow two-thirds of public spending, up from less than half in 1979.

For many years shifts in geopolitics and political ideology combined to allow health spending to increase. "Generations of politicians and the public have been able to enjoy rapidly increasing health spending without feeling they had to pay for it," says Anita Charlesworth, chief economist of the Health Foundation think-tank. But she says the scope to go further without hitting other services "is very limited".

The sense of a zero-sum game - that will eventually confront Britons with far starker realities about the price they are paying for the NHS - is underlined by calculations from the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies.

It found that, even if the NHS meets its own target to deliver productivity improvements of 2.4 per cent each year by the

turn of the decade, the health budget would need to increase by around 0.8 per cent a year in real terms to meet demand and cost pressures. Achieving this would imply cuts to other government departments - already battered by five years of austerity - averaging 6.1 per cent a year.

## The NHS has faced crisis before but this one is of a different order

A series of restructures - the most recent to remove layers of management and hand more budgetary control to doctors and nurses - have, say critics, done little to ease demand for expensive hospital care, which in the UK swallows almost half of the health service budget.

Shifting the service's center of gravity away from acute hospitals and towards preventive and community services is a priority for Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, who spent a decade as an executive at UnitedHealth,

a US private health insurer.

Mr Stevens has drawn up a blueprint to break down the rigid silos that separate different parts of the health service and help meet some of the annual £22bn efficiency cost savings he has promised by 2020.

He is doing so, however, against a backdrop of a huge cut in funding for social care which, unlike health, is means-tested in the UK. The health department is among a small number of ministries to have been granted an inflation-protected funding deal. Some critics argue this has delayed reform, but the move serves to underline the political importance of the NHS, which employs one in 20 of all British workers. As proof of its commitment to the NHS - on which the opposition Labour party has long held an electoral advantage - the ruling Conservatives promised during this year's election campaign to inject an additional £8bn a year into the service by 2020.

However, as deficits soar, it is becoming clear that the money will be insufficient. Chris Ham, chief executive of the King's Fund, an independent health think-tank, scents "panic" in the health department and "denial" in the Treasury over the funding crisis.

NHS insiders, meanwhile, mutter that ministers have conveniently forgotten to read the small print in Mr Stevens's plan, which they insist made clear £8bn would only be enough if there were no further cuts in social care spending and the health service was not expected to expand the range of services it provides.

In fact, the communities and local government department - responsible for social care - is unlikely to emerge unscathed from November's spending round, which will mark the next stage in Britain's austerity programme by allocating budgets for each ministry.

Some in the NHS fear ministers will seek to delay injecting the additional funds until the final years of the five-year parliament, counting on economic growth to deliver the necessary proceeds. It has yet to state exactly where the mon-

ey will come from and the task has been made harder by Prime Minister David Cameron's decision to rule out rises to most key tax rates.

The big question now, is whether the NHS will have to find other ways of raising revenue not only to survive in its current form, but also to meet the ever-expanding demand for healthcare. Savings made over the past five years relied heavily on a wage squeeze - unlikely to be sustainable as private sector earnings start to outstrip those in the public sector - and other factors such as the expiry of patents, which cut the cost of a number of major drugs.

To some the failure to engage in a serious argument about the most effective mechanism for funding healthcare is an unwanted byproduct of the reverence in which Britons hold the NHS.

"It shields it from criticism and shuts out any competing ideas," says Kristian Niemietz, head of health and welfare at the Institute for Economic Affairs. The result, he says, is that the NHS is held to "unrealistically low standards... because most people who ever encounter the NHS don't encounter foreign systems so they have no comparator".

The NHS was rated the number one health system in the world last year in the annual rankings drawn up by the Commonwealth Fund, lauded on measures such as equity, safety and access. When the outcomes for patients were measured, however, the verdict was far less complimentary. It came second bottom on a number of criteria relating to whether patients lived healthy lives. These included "mortality amenable to healthcare" - or "keeping people alive", as Mr Niemietz puts it.

He cites the social health insurance systems of the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland - all of which have come at, or near, the top of previous Fund surveys. "I don't think you will read anywhere in the [British] newspapers 'Swiss system number one, definite proof, social insurance is the way to go'... it is confirmation [of] bias," he says.

NHS leaders argue that the potential of the health service to provide care more cheaply and efficiently remains vast. However, as other public services are stretched through a further five years of austerity, the high price of protecting the NHS will become apparent. Devotees of Britain's "national religion" may find their faith in their unique model of "free for all" healthcare is tested as never before.

## Fees spark fears of 'fiercer rationing'

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the need for austerity has left all developed nations struggling to provide healthcare at lower cost. Britain's model may be unique but the problems with which it is grappling are similar around the world. One lesson from overseas is that while increasing user charges may have an obvious appeal for any health system it is also likely to deter people from seeking care, thereby failing to save money in the long run.

"It's counterproductive because often it doesn't raise much revenue and it can put off the very people who you actually want to use health services," says Sarah Thomson of the World Health Organization.

Kristian Niemietz, head of health and welfare at the UK's Institute of Economic Affairs, argues that, rather than the transparency that widening the range of charges would bring, the most likely outcome is a slow erosion of the service the NHS is able to offer.

"We'll just get fiercer rationing behind closed doors... the criteria for funding something will become stricter, expensive medical technology will just not be purchased, pushing up the waiting times, or putting pressure on doctors not to prescribe," he says.

The perils of overt rationing were seen when a group of clinicians in Devon proposed to limit routine surgery for obese patients and smokers. The speed with which NHS leaders

and politicians moved to disavow the plan underlined the lack of any public or political consensus behind formally limiting entitlement to healthcare.

The picture is far from bleak. Hospital specialists are working with GP practices and some hospitals are hiring GPs, transcending the split between secondary and primary care. The aim is both to spare the hospitals' budget and treat patients where most would prefer: inside their own homes.



By Lynn Berry in Fryazino

**T**HE elderly former Soviet military officer who answers the door is known in the West as “The man who saved the world.” A movie with that title, which was released in theaters in the United States on Friday, tells the harrowing story of Sept. 26, 1983, when Stanislav Petrov made a decision credited by many with averting a nuclear war.

An alarm had gone off that night, signaling the launch of U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles, and it was up to the 44-year-old lieutenant colonel to determine, and quickly, whether the attack on the Soviet Union was real.

“I realized that I had to make some kind of decision, and I was only 50/50,” Petrov told The Associated Press.

## ■ In his homeland, Petrov’s role in history has won him little fame

Despite the data coming in from the Soviet Union’s early-warning satellites over the United States, Petrov decided to consider it a false alarm. Had he done otherwise, the Soviet leadership could have responded by ordering a retaliatory nuclear strike on the United States.

What made this even more dangerous was that the Soviet Union appears genuinely to have feared a surprise U.S. nuclear attack during what was an exceptionally tense period of the Cold War. That month, the Soviets had shot down a passenger plane flying to South Korea from the U.S., suspecting it of spying. The United States, after a series of provocative military maneuvers, was preparing for a major NATO exercise, called Able Archer, which simulated preparations for a nuclear attack.

In the movie, “The Man Who Saved the World,” by Danish director Peter Anthony, actors portray the events of that night in 1983. The dramatic scenes are interwoven with footage of the real Petrov as an older man at his home in Russia, and on a 2006 trip to the United States, where he receives an award at the United Nations and meets with movie stars, including Kevin Costner, Matt Damon and Robert De Niro.

In his homeland, Petrov’s role in history has won him little fame. He still lives in Fryazino, a town on the outskirts of Moscow, in a simple, unkempt apartment that

# Russian who ‘saved the world’ recalls his decision as 50/50



Former Soviet missile defense forces officer Stanislav Petrov poses for a photo at his home in Fryazino, Moscow region

looks much as it does in the movie, down to the long strip of yellow fly paper hanging from the ceiling. Unlike in the movie, where Petrov is shown angrily chasing out foreign journalists who have come to hear his story, he proves a gracious host, welcoming guests into his kitchen.

When Petrov, now 76, looks back on that night at the secret Serpukhov-15 control center, he remembers the sound of the alarm that shattered the silence shortly past midnight.

“It was this quiet situation and suddenly the roar of the siren breaks in and the command post lights up with the word ‘LAUNCH,’” he said. “This hit the nerves. I was really taken aback. Holy cow!”

He stood up and saw that the others were all looking at him in confusion. “My team was close to panic and it hit me that if panic sets in then it’s all over.” He needed to make a decision.

In the movie, Petrov speaks of not wanting to be responsible for setting off a nuclear war. But in the AP interview he suggests this was more of the filmmakers’ poetic license.

“Sorry, I didn’t have time to think about whether I would be the one who started World War III,” he said. “I had to decide how reliable the information sent by the computer was.”

Within minutes of the first alarm, the siren sounded again, warning of a second U.S. missile launch. Soon, the system was reporting that five missiles had been launched.

Petrov reported to his commander that the system was giving false information. He was not at all certain, but his decision was informed by the fact that Soviet ground radar could not confirm a launch. The radar system picked up incoming missiles only well after any launch, but he knew it to be more reliable than the satellites.

The false alarm was later found to have been caused by a malfunction of the satellite, which mistook the reflection of the sun off high clouds for a missile launch.

Petrov was not rewarded for his actions, most likely because doing so would have brought to light the failure of the Soviet’s early-warning satellites. Although his commanding officer did not support Petrov at the time, he was the

one who revealed the incident after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. If Col. Gen. Yuri Votintsev had not spoken out, Petrov said he himself “would have forgotten about it like a bad dream.”

Ret. Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, an expert on Russia’s strategic nuclear forces, played down the importance of the decision forced on Petrov, saying the Soviet leadership in any case would have waited for confirmation from the radars before launching a retaliatory attack.

What’s more, Dvorkin said, Russia no longer even has full satellite coverage of the United States, and relies fully on its radar network to monitor U.S. nuclear forces.

“The situation in Russia today is such that the satellite system doesn’t work at all, and this doesn’t frighten anyone too much,” he said. “As you can see, everyone is living peacefully, without panic.” AP

“I didn’t have time to think about whether I would be the one who started World War III

STANISLAV PETROV



# Volkswagen admits to cheating U.S. emissions tests for years

By Jeff Plungis

**V**OLKSWAGEN AG admitted to systematically cheating on U.S. air pollution tests for years, leaving the automaker vulnerable to billions in fines and possible criminal prosecution.

The company sold diesel Volkswagen and Audi cars with software that turns on full pollution controls only when the car is undergoing official emissions testing.

During normal driving, the cars pollute 10 times to 40 times the legal limits, the Environmental Protection Agency said. EPA called the technology a "defeat device."

Violations of the Clean Air Act could be referred to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution, EPA said. The potential financial liability is unclear. EPA could fine the company USD37,500 per vehicle, said Cynthia Giles, the agency's assistant administrator for enforcement. With 482,000 autos part of the case, the total could be \$18 billion. The VW investigation involves model years 2009-2015.



The VW badge

"Using a defeat device in cars to evade clean air standards is illegal and a threat to public health," said Cynthia Giles, the agency's assistant administrator for enforcement. "EPA is committed to making sure that all automakers play by the same rules."

Last year Ford Motor Co. was forced to lower mileage estimates and compensate more than 200,000 its customers. The Dearborn, Michigan-based company sent out payments ranging from \$200 to \$1,050.

In 2012, an investigation led to Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Motors Corp. relabeling some of their top-selling U.S. models.

Volkswagen said in a statement it is cooperating with the investigation and unable to comment further. The EPA and the California Air Resources Board said their investigations are continuing.

The affected models include some of VW's most popular U.S. cars: the Beetle, the Jetta, the Golf and the Passat. The Audi A3 is also part of the in-

vestigation. As recently as July, diesel models accounted for 26 percent of VW brand sales in the U.S., according to a company news release.

EPA said in a letter to VW Friday that the company knew or should have known about the vehicles' software. In a letter to VW Friday, the EPA said the company admitted it had designed and installed software to evade pollution controls after regulators made clear they weren't going to certify the automakers' 2016 models.

Consumers haven't yet been ordered to return to their dealers for a recall, and it's safe

to keep driving the cars, said Janet McCabe, acting assistant administrator of the agency's Office of Air and Radiation.

It had been surprising that Volkswagen diesel models were able to get impressive horsepower output and fuel economy performance using less costly pollution control technology than employed in some other automaker's engines, said Bill Visnic, an independent auto analyst in Weirton, West Virginia.

The software workaround might have been what enabled the performance without the expected pollution controls, he said. "You can't have anything like this that's intended to game the system," Visnic said.

It would be very difficult for Volkswagen to add new pollution control equipment to the existing engines, so the only way to fix this may be to cut the horsepower and fuel economy performance of the models to lower the pollution output once the software is eliminated, said Visnic, who has been studying engine design for two decades.

The EPA has been concerned about how well its laboratory tests reflect conditions consumers experience in the real world, amid consumer complaints. The agency announced last July it would overhaul the tests, which involve allowing computers to drive cars on a dynamometer to ensure accurate, repeatable results. **Bloomberg**

**Using a defeat device in cars to evade clean air standards is illegal and a threat to public health**

CYNTHIA GILES

## ASK THE VET

by Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester



### ANTIBIOTICS USED FOR DOG BITES IN HUMANS

**D**OG bites can often result in infections and using antibiotics can prevent these infections in many cases. Topical over the counter antibiotics can be applied immediately after cleaning the dog bite wound. Oral antibiotics may be recommended if the bite wound is deep or if there is an infection present.

#### DOG BITE FIRST AID

The dog saliva is filled with numerous bacteria and is transferred on the skin when the dog bites you. In addition, your skin may also contain a number of bacteria. For this reason, it is important to clean the wound and apply some antibiotic cream to kill the bacteria in the bite area.

The bite wound should be cleaned with an antibacterial soap. Keep the bite wound under running water for 3-5 minutes, as this will clean the area from the remaining bacteria from the dog's saliva. Pat the wound dry with a clean towel and apply some antibiotic cream or powder on the skin.

However, if the bite is severe and it is bleeding, the best course of action is to go immediately to the doctor, as stitches may be needed.

#### ANTIBIOTICS FOR DOG BITES

Antibiotics are essential for dog bites, as these will prevent the spread of bacteria from the dog's saliva and also prevent an infection.

If applied on the wound immediately after cleaning the bite, the topical antibiotics can dramatically reduce your chances of getting infected.

Topical antibiotics should be applied 2 or 3 times per day up to 5 days after the dog bite.

If the wound is infected, there will be symptoms such as:

- Redness
- Swelling
- A film of pus
- Pain when touching the area
- Fever
- A discharge from the wound

#### TYPES OF ANTIBIOTICS

The antibiotics recommended for dog bites are typically topical creams, but if the bite is deep, oral antibiotics will also be recommended.

The topical creams may contain a low concentration of antibiotics.

The oral antibiotics may be of various types, depending on the severity of the bite:



• A combination of Amoxicillin/Clavulanic Acid is the most frequently prescribed oral antibiotic for dog bites or other types of infections. The treatment should be applied for 7 to 14 days, as recommended by the doctor and the meds shouldn't be discontinued without consulting the doctor first, as the body can easily develop resistance to the compounds of the antibiotics and these won't be effective in the future.

• Penicillin can also be prescribed for dog bites to prevent or treat an infection. Penicillin is a strong antibiotic and may be replaced with ampicillin

- Doxycycline or clindamycin
- Erythromycin can also be prescribed, especially if you are allergic to penicillin

or amoxicillin

The length of the treatment will be determined by the doctor. Typically, to prevent an infection, a dose for 7 days is enough, but if the infection is already present, a 2-week dose will be recommended.

Hope this helps  
Till next week  
Dr Ruan

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