

Coalition Letter Re: Livestock Antibiotics Use

Thursday, July 09, 2009 --

Dear Chairwoman Slaughter and Ranking Member Dreier:

The Coalition for Animal Health strongly supports measures to improve public health. However, we oppose H.R. 1549, "Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2009", which is the subject of an upcoming hearing in the Rules Committee. We oppose the bill because we are opposed to legislative bans of important animal health medicines that have been approved as safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration. One of our central goals is to contribute to public health by providing safe and healthful meat products. We need healthy animals, and the tools to keep animals healthy, to meet that goal.

Several public and private programs have been adopted and together they form layers of protection to ensure we can use antibiotics to keep animals healthy without harming public health. These protective measures include:

A stringent approval process that was made more stringent with the addition of risk assessment requirements in 2003. Some of the compounds affected by the proposed legislation are undergoing review under these new requirements.

Post-approval risk assessments that allow policymakers to measure the risks and benefits of a proposed policy have been conducted and published by FDA, sponsors and researchers. Some additional compounds affected by the bill have been examined by these risk assessments, showing extremely low levels of risk.

Food safety monitoring and surveillance programs that have been established by government agencies and sponsors to track the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Responsible use programs that are specific to the different livestock species to give producers specific guidelines on how to safely and properly use antibiotics in their health management systems.

Pathogen reduction programs that have led to documented reductions in pathogens on meat, contributing to decreased food-borne illness.

The bill mirrors the political, not scientific, action taken by the European Union except that it appears to go further by effectively banning the use of antibiotics to prevent diseases. As a result of the removal of antibiotics for growth promotion in Europe, many European countries have documented a significant increase in animal disease and an increase in the use of antibiotics to treat that disease. Recently published literature shows resistance patterns in humans have rarely declined as a result of this action. In fact, recent

data from The Netherlands shows both penicillin and tetracycline resistance in *Salmonella typhimurium* has increased in humans since the ban, while these same resistances have declined in the United States over the same period. Europe has jeopardized animal health and has not demonstrated an improvement in human health.

Last Congress, the topic of antibiotic use in food animal production was discussed in a hearing held by the Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry. The witnesses included veterinarians from USDA's Animal Health and Plant Inspection Service and FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine, producers, veterinary practitioners, and academicians. We believe this hearing's record illustrates the points outlined in this letter.

Congress should reject this unscientific and unjustified bill that will jeopardize our ability to protect animal health, animal welfare and the food supply.

Sincerely,

American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Association of Swine Veterinarians
American Meat Institute
American Sheep Industry Association
Animal Health Institute
American Veterinary Medical Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Pork Producers Council
National Turkey Federation
United Egg Producers