

PREVENT UNTREATABLE DISEASES

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The effectiveness of antibiotics in curing human disease.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Many of the same drugs doctors use to treat illnesses such as food poisoning and staph infections are also used to raise pigs, chicken, and cattle for the kitchen. In animal factories, these same antibiotics aren't used just to treat sick livestock. They're also fed daily to healthy animals because producers believe that their animals grow quicker and reach slaughter weight sooner.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture the principal cause of antibiotic resistance in food-borne bacteria like salmonella and campylobacter. By unnecessarily pumping huge quantities of antibiotics into healthy animals, producers are creating conditions where bacteria can quickly develop resistance to these drugs. When this happens—one strain of salmonella is now resistant to five antibiotics—doctors have fewer tools to combat human disease.

The European Union has already acted, banning all growth-promoting uses of antibiotics that have a role in human medicine. In June, the World Health Organization repeated its call for the "termination or rapid phasing out of the use of antimicrobials [which include anti-



Penicillin mold

Richard Edelman

iotics] for growth promotion if they are also used for treatment of humans."

But the Food and Drug Administration is dragging its feet. While it studies the problem, how many diseases will become untreatable?

We must act now.

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Dear Dr. Henney:

I am writing to urge the Food and Drug Administration to ban the use of human antibiotics to make livestock grow faster.

Thank you for your help,

J. Capozzelli (J. Capozzelli)

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