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Jan. 11, 2001

0537 '01 MAR 19 P3:00

Commissioner Jane E. Henney, M. D.  
U. S. Food and Drug Administration  
<execsec@oc.fda.gov>

Dear Commissioner Henney:

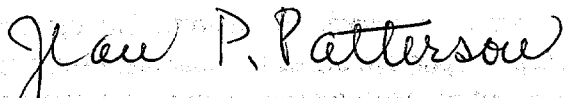
I urge you to collect and report data on the quantity of antibiotics used in U. S. agriculture.

I am impressed with the need for such data because of reading an authoritative report, "Hogging It!" just released by the Union of Concerned Scientists. In it I learn that the rise in antibiotic resistance is slowly eliminating the effectiveness of antibiotics in treating infectious diseases in people. While there is growing acceptance of the causes of antibiotic resistance, there are few publicly available data on the quantity of antibiotics used in the U. S. This is information that is necessary for scientists to be able to explore the links between antibiotic use and the development of drug resistance, and for developing rational strategies to curb use.

The Union of Concerned Scientists report, "Hogging It!" estimates that a staggering 24.6 million pounds - roughly 70 percent of all antibiotic drugs - are fed to healthy cows, pigs, and chickens annually for nontherapeutic purposes, such as growth promotion. While these and other figures quoted in the report are good, they are not good enough. Government-guaranteed information on U. S. antibiotic use is necessary for creating effective solutions for reducing antibiotic use. The Food and Drug Administration has recognized the need for collecting such information but it has not taken steps to establish the necessary system.

I urge the FDA to move ahead now to establish a system for collecting basic data on agricultural antibiotic use in the United States. The information should be collected for both human and agricultural use and should include the class, indication, dosage, and treatment period.

Sincerely,



Jean P. Patterson

cc: Nutrition Action Health Letter

99P-0435

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