

19 Feb 01

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Commissioner Jane Henney, M.D.
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane, Rm.1471
Rockville MD 20857

Dear Commissioner Henney:

The World Health Organization has repeatedly called for the termination or rapid phase out of all growth-promoting uses of antimicrobials that have a role in human medicine. The European Union has already banned the use of antibiotics for animal growth promotion if the medicines are also used to treat humans. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the overuse of antibiotics in animals the principal cause of antibiotic resistance in food-borne bacteria like salmonella and campylobacter. Other respected organizations, such as the Union of Concerned Scientists, recommend halting the use of human antibiotics to make livestock grow faster.

Overprescribing lifesaving antibiotics has created a looming public health crisis. This has become increasingly clear as once easily curable illnesses no longer respond to previously effective drugs. Although drugs given to animals contribute to antibiotic resistance in human diseases, livestock producers have used antibiotics on hogs, cows, and chickens for decades. In fact, about a third of the antibiotics manufactured in the U.S. are added to animal feed to fatten livestock.

The FDA has undermined our ability to fight disease by postponing clearly required action. We cannot justify this damage to human health for the minimal savings in the cost of meat production. I urge the FDA avoid further delay. Protect our health by immediately following the lead of responsible and reputable organizations by withdrawing approvals for the use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion in livestock.

Sincerely,

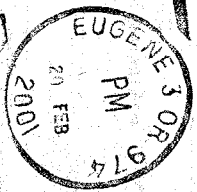


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