

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact Ron Phillips at AHI at 202/662-4130

Antibiotics and Safeguarding the Nation's Food Supply *Fact Sheet*

Antibiotics are critically important to produce safe food. The nation's livestock and poultry producers prudently use these U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved treatments to raise healthy animals. By protecting our livestock and poultry, we are able to prevent the spread of disease on our farms. Preventing the spread of disease is important in reducing the presence of pathogens in our food. Farm animals that are protected by antibiotics are healthier, have less need for therapeutic antibiotics, receive fewer antibiotics and produce safer food.

- Antibiotics undergo a stringent U.S. FDA regulatory approval process and the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly work to monitor their safe and proper use. These products have been used safely through the past 40 years.
- The vast majority of antibiotics – some 85 to 90 percent – are used to treat and prevent disease, according to study conducted with the producers of animal antibiotics.
- Fluoroquinolones have been approved for use in poultry since 1995. They are used to treat specific, serious animal diseases and are given only under prescription of a veterinarian. According to a survey conducted by the National Chicken Council, less than two percent of chicken flocks are ever treated with a fluoroquinolone. Normally a single course of the antibiotic, lasting only several days, is sufficient to treat the outbreak.
- Published data from the federal government and scientific journals estimate that use of antibiotics in farm animals accounts for less than five percent of antibiotic resistance in humans.
- There are more than 8 billion food producing animals in the United States compared to 275 million people, and the human use of antibiotics is 10 times the amount used with farm animals on a per weight basis, according to an article in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.
- The World Health Organization estimates 40 percent of the antibiotics used in human medicine are unnecessary. Collectively, we all need to work together to ensure the prudent use of antibiotics.
- In a recent study of organic poultry – poultry that is raised free of antibiotics – researchers found Salmonella was three times more likely to occur than in

conventionally raised chicken, according to a study published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases. Similarly, data from Denmark shows organically raised poultry three times as likely to contain Campylobacter as conventionally raised poultry.

- Another study done in Denmark, a country that restricted the use of preventative antibiotics, showed an increase in disease and a 30 percent increase in antibiotic use to treat these diseases.
- The attempt to suggestively link anthrax and antibiotic resistance is alarmingly inaccurate and misleading. The effectiveness of drugs like Cipro against anthrax is in no way diminished by the use of antibiotics in animals. Only foodborne pathogens like Salmonella have the potential to develop resistance in animals as a result of antibiotic use. Neither people nor animals become resistant to antibiotics; it is bacteria that can become resistant over time. The use of antibiotics in animals has no impact at all on the resistance pattern of bacteria used as agents of bioterrorism.