

Survey Shows Decline in Antibiotic Use in Animals; Decrease From 1999 to 2001 Despite Increased Meat Production

SAN DIEGO, Sept. 29 /PRNewswire/ -- New data from a survey of animal health companies show that the volume of antibiotics used in animals in the U.S. steadily declined over the past three years. In 2001, 21.8 million pounds of antibiotics were sold, dropping from 23.7 million pounds in 2000 and 24 million in 1999(1). The data were collected from a survey of members of the Animal Health Institute (AHI), consisting of companies that make medicines for pets and farm animals. The survey data include antibiotics used for both farm and companion animals.

The data will be presented for the first time tomorrow by Professor Herman Goossens, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Antwerp, Belgium, during a symposium on "Antibiotic Use in Food Animals: Impact on Resistance in Humans" at the 42nd Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC). It is the world's premier scientific meeting on infectious diseases and antimicrobial agents.

"Veterinarians and livestock and poultry producers are constantly evaluating their use of antibiotics as part of the judicious use of these products," said Alexander S. Mathews, AHI President and CEO. "While meat production between 1999 and 2001 rose 1.1 million pounds, use of antibiotics is not rising. Therefore, the amount of antibiotics used per pound of meat produced is going down."

"This trend can be attributed to three factors: judicious use of antibiotics and continuing improvements in production practices that reduce the need for antibiotics; continued improvements in production and preventative care practices; and the ongoing efforts of various public health and consumer advocacy groups to raise awareness of the issue," Mathews added.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved antibiotics for use in animal husbandry for four basic purposes: disease treatment, disease control, disease prevention, and health maintenance, as measured by improved growth rates or more efficient feed use. Health maintenance claims have commonly been called "growth promotion." The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) considers treatment, control and prevention of disease to be therapeutic uses. Therapeutic use of antibiotics to treat, control and prevent disease continues to comprise more than 80 percent of total use, despite claims by some that a majority of antibiotics are fed unnecessarily to healthy animals.

AHI survey respondents provide an assessment each year of the amount of veterinary antibiotics sold for therapeutic use and health maintenance purposes. The percentage of veterinary antibiotics use reported as "therapeutic" was 88 percent in 2000 and 83 percent in 2001. This shift in percentage did not result in a change in the types of antibiotics used but rather was related to a regulatory change in late 2000 that reclassified certain claims for penicillin feed additives as non-treatment.

While health maintenance, or growth promotion, claims are controversial, there is growing scientific evidence that use of antibiotics in animals, as approved by the FDA, helps maintain the health of animals by suppressing disease, thereby allowing animals to grow more efficiently. The European ban of antibiotics for use in growth promotion has sparked significant increases in the use of more modern antibiotics, and those in classes used in human medicine, for treatment purposes, indicating sharp rises in animal disease. Denmark, frequently cited as a model of responsible antibiotic use, has seen a 96 percent increase in the use of therapeutic drugs for animals since 1996. "While total antibiotic usage has declined by half, the striking increase in animal disease and the need for therapeutic intervention works against the interests of public health," commented Mathews.

"Good information is needed to make informed decisions," Mathews continued, "so AHI is continuing in its efforts to provide the most accurate assessment possible of the types of veterinary antibiotics being used and their specific applications. The most recent survey stands

as strong evidence that the efforts of veterinarians, livestock and poultry producers, animal health companies, regulatory authorities, and advocacy groups are advancing the principles of judicious use and preventative care to ensure that veterinary antibiotics are used responsibly."

(1) AHI reported on Feb. 14, 2001, that 20.5 million pounds of antibiotics were sold in 1999. That figure has been updated to show results from animal health companies that have become AHI members since the 1999 survey and to reflect improved data collection procedures, thus making the 1999 data more comparable with data from 2000 and 2001.

2000 - 2001 AHI SURVEY
Active Antibacterial Ingredients Sold by AHI Members

Antibiotic Class	2000 Pounds	2001 Pounds
Ionophores/Arsenicals*	9,165,043	7,758,492
Tetracyclines	6,693,834	7,144,523
Cephalosporins, macrolides, lincosamides, polypeptides, streptogramins, and other minor classes of antibiotics**	4,857,896	4,268,658
Sulfonamides	1,351,899	592,002
Penicillins	1,011,252	1,814,070
Aminoglycosides	337,819	257,252
Fluoroquinolones	38,082	36,204
Total	23,725,824	21,871,202

*Unique drug products developed for animal production and not related to traditional antibiotics.

**Grouping necessary to abide by disclosure agreements.