

FACTS ABOUT ANTIBIOTIC USE IN FOOD PRODUCING ANIMALS

- Farmers are committed to producing safe, abundant and affordable food products of the highest quality. Healthy animals make for safe food, and disease prevention is the key to keeping food producing animals healthy. Antibiotics are sometimes necessary to help prevent, control and treat diseases in food animals.
- The FDA regulations that govern the use of antibiotics in cattle feed are stricter than most other uses in animals or people.
- Farmers have gone beyond the legal requirements of safe antibiotic use and created Quality Assurance Programs. These programs contain guidelines for farmers to minimize the use of antibiotics as well as use them properly only when they are needed so that consumers can have confidence in the safety and quality of the food they are purchasing.
- Veterinarians work with beef, dairy, small ruminant, swine and poultry farmers to keep animals healthy with vaccinations, good nutrition and good management so antibiotic use is minimized. Veterinarians and farmers also work with the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to make sure that when needed, antibiotics are used responsibly so that food products remain safe.
- Many of the antibiotics used in animal feed are not important in human medicine. Banning the use of antibiotics in animal feeds can cause increased suffering in animals and may necessitate the increased use of antibiotics that are important for use in people.
- Based on scientific studies, there is not clear evidence that the consumption of animal products is related to the development of the vast majority of antibiotic resistance in humans. However, several layers of safety protection are in place to make sure antimicrobial resistance does not become a problem.
 - The FDA process for evaluating antibiotics used in food producing animals is more stringent than the process for human antibiotics. The approval process ensures human food safety by evaluating the antibiotic's risk to people, including minimizing the potential for developing antibiotic resistance and ensuring that no violative residues are in meat, milk and eggs.
 - Once approved, animal medication uses are carefully monitored by FDA and the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service for safety in animals as well as safety of food produced from animals. FDA has the authority to immediately remove any drug from the market if there are imminent animal or human health concerns.
 - Farmers are required by law to adhere to label instructions and instructions from their veterinarian when using any animal medication. Farmer organizations, veterinarians and the FDA have collaborated to produce guidelines for safe and responsible use of antibiotics to safeguard public health.

- Several surveillance systems are in place to monitor the possible emergence of antibiotic resistance. For example, The National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System is a multi-agency program, including USDA, FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which monitors for resistant bacteria in people, animals and retail meats.
- Pathogen reduction programs at harvest and processing facilities are in place to reduce overall foodborne illness. Should antibiotic resistance occur, these programs would have a direct effect on reducing these bacteria in food products.
- Proper handling, preparation and storage of food is the final step in preventing food-borne illness.

For More Information: frequently Asked Questions about Antimicrobial Use and Antimicrobial Resistance http://www.avma.org/issues/antimicrobial_use_resistance.asp

December 2010 — Visit our Web site: www.lsuagcenter.com

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, William B. Richardson, Chancellor

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, David J. Boethel, Vice Chancellor and Director

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.