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NEW FDA GUIDANCES TO CLEAN UP ANTIBIOTICS USE IN FOOD ANIMAL PRODUCTION

The FDA released today several draft guidance policies intended to wean US food producers off use of antibiotics for non-therapeutic purposes and growth promotion. The guidances focus on two of the most important leverage points to decrease selective pressure which drives resistant bacteria in the food chain and the environment. Over a three year period, the guidance policies would require drug companies to remove label language promoting or allowing the low-dose, continuous use of antibiotics over the life of the food animal. These common uses in a herd or flock are deemed a powerful selective pressure leading to emergence of antibiotic resistance in the ecosystem. The other key component of the guidances would require veterinary supervision and oversight to ensure more targeted use of antibiotics in food production.

It has been a longstanding irony that antibiotic use in US human medicine requires prescription and guidelines to be met by medical doctors, with no such requirements for antibiotic use in food animal production in the US. “The new US FDA guidances now place the food animal industry on a level playing field with human medical community in terms of requiring responsible use of antibiotics. Regulations for responsible antibiotic use in food production are already codified in many European countries.” said Kathy Young, Executive Director of the Alliance for Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA).

For over twenty years, scientific reports by public health groups such as APUA, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Institute of Medicine (IOM), and the Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA) have called for responsible antibiotic use and more hygienic management in food animal production. The new US FDA action addresses mounting scientific evidence of transfer of resistant genes in the environment to dangerous pathogens in humans and the role that food animal production plays in that process. Dr. Stuart Levy, Professor at Tufts University School of Medicine and APUA president, notes: “physicians and policymakers are very concerned about increasing drug -resistant infections in humans with few effective antibiotics available to treat them. There are now hundreds of peer reviewed studies linking the massive use of antibiotics in food animal production to emergence of resistant organisms that can be passed on to pathogens of human consequence. These voluntary FDA guidances will hopefully promote leadership by the large food producers to find alternative management practices and tools to reduce antibiotic overuse on the farm, but there is a need for strong monitoring of their implementation. ”

About: The Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) has been the leading global non-governmental organization fighting to preserve the effectiveness of antimicrobials since 1981. With affiliated chapters in over 66 developed and developing countries, we conduct research, education and advocacy to control antimicrobial resistance and ensure access to effective antibiotics . For more information, please visit our website at www.apua.org.

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