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NEW FDA DATA SHOW RISING TRENDS IN ANTIBIOTIC USE ON FARMS

Latest data underscores importance, shortcomings of new White House initiative

Chicago, IL -- Today FDA released its long-overdue [Annual Summary Report on Antimicrobials Sold or Distributed in 2012 for Use in Food-Producing Animals](#), which reflects use trends from 2009-2012. It comes on the heels of the White House announcement that it will be creating a task force and advisory council to address the growing crisis of antibiotic-resistance, which is linked to overuse and misuse of critical drugs in food animals.

[Keep Antibiotics Working](#) (KAW), a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, animal welfare, and other advocacy groups dedicated to ending the inappropriate use of antibiotics in food animals issued the following statement in response:

“While we’re pleased FDA finally released these 2012 data, providing more detail than ever before, the overall trends are alarming: Antibiotic use in food animals continues to rise every year, and use of some of the most important human drugs is going up the fastest,” said David Wallinga, MD, director of the organization Healthy Food Action and a member of the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition steering committee.

“Year on year, the amount of medically important antibiotics used in food animal production keeps rising (up 16% since 2009). Though there’s been a broad increase across all drug classes (only sulfonamides showed any decrease over the period), sales of cephalosporins, penicillins and lincosamides are up 37%, 40% and 134%, respectively. The rise in use of critically important cephalosporins comes despite the FDA putting in place new restrictions in the spring of 2012. Over the same (2009 to 2012) period that U.S. food animal use of antibiotics rose 16%, the Netherlands -- the world’s 2nd largest food exporter -- was able to reduce its livestock use of antibiotics by 50%.”

Table 7 in the report also provides new information on how antibiotics important to humans are being used in livestock: 97% of livestock antibiotics were sold over the counter, without requiring a prescription. 70% were sold as animal feed additives, another 24% as additives to

drinking water. The new data indicate that of these herd or flock-wide drugs, more than two-thirds (68%) could have been for growth promotion.

“Antibiotic use in U.S. livestock is huge and continues to escalate, even while many leading meat exporting countries have halved their livestock usage. If the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services are serious about addressing the threat to the American public from worsening resistance, it cannot adopt a ‘wait and see’ stance. It must push the U.S. livestock sector to lead, not follow in reducing use of precious antibiotics,” added Wallinga.

If you’d like to connect with members of the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition for further comment, please contact Katie Andriulli at kandriulli@mrss.com or (917) 438-4605.

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Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) is a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane, and other advocacy groups with more than 11 million supporters. Learn more at www.keepantibioticsworking.com.