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In Face of Major Drug-Resistant *Salmonella* Outbreak, Keep Antibiotics Working Calls on Obama Administration and Congress to Address Crisis of Antibiotic Resistance

Washington, D.C. – In the midst of an on-going outbreak linked to antibiotic-resistant *Salmonella* in chicken -- which has sickened nearly 300 people and resulted in at least 78 hospitalizations (42% of patients) -- Keep Antibiotics Working today called for greater leadership from the Obama Administration and Congress to address the growing crisis of antibiotic resistance.

The type of *Salmonella* responsible for the outbreak, *Salmonella* Heidelberg, causes not only illness of the gastrointestinal tract (diarrhea, cramping, etc.), but also potentially deadly, invasive infections. Among the group of strains responsible for the outbreak are several that are resistant to many of the medically important antibiotics that are used most frequently in food animals (tetracyclines, penicillins, sulfas, and aminoglycosides) rendering these medicines unable to treat the invasive infections in these patients. Instead, doctors are turning to newer, more expensive antibiotics. Over time resistance will develop to these antibiotics as well, expanding the problem even further.

“This outbreak puts human faces on the human antibiotic resistant infections coming from farms,” said Steven Roach, Senior Analyst for Keep Antibiotics Working. “It has been over 36 years since the FDA first recognized the risks caused by antibiotic misuse. And yet, the FDA’s failure to address the problem in any meaningful way means more patients are likely to land in hospitals with infections that are either untreatable or very difficult to treat.”

“We can’t idly wait for yet another nasty outbreak of bacterial food poisoning to occur before we take action. We’re calling on the Obama Administration to act now to effectively address the problem of antibiotic resistance, specifically by withdrawing the FDA’s approval of medically important antibiotics in animals for purposes other than treating disease. In addition, the FDA must begin monitoring antibiotic use on our farms. Otherwise, how else can we possibly assess whether or not efforts aimed at reducing antibiotic overuse are being effective?”

“Two bills in Congress, the Preventing Antibiotic Resistance (PAR) Act, and its companion legislation in the House, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical

Treatment Act (PAMTA), would do much to curb routine antibiotic misuse. We urge Congress to turn their attention to this pressing problem immediately – before we face the next outbreak with even more dire consequences.”

If you’d like to connect with Steven Roach or other members of the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition for comment, please contact Katie Andriulli at kandriulli@mrss.com or (202) 478-6138.

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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.