



The Honorable Xavier Becerra

Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, Southwest

Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

We write to you as health professionals on the front lines of the antibiotic resistance crisis. We know how precious antibiotics are, and we're all doing our part to preserve the effectiveness of our antibiotic arsenal as we see resistance spread. That's why we're concerned about the ways in which conventional meat producers continue to overuse medically important antibiotics. We urge you to act by directing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to collect antibiotic use data on farms and set a target for reducing that use over time.

Antibiotics are a cornerstone of modern medicine. We rely on them to treat infections and make surgeries and other routine procedures as safe as possible. When antibiotics are overused in meat production or any other setting, bacteria develop resistance more quickly, making the drugs less effective.

At least [35,000](#) Americans die every year from antibiotic-resistant infections, and one study estimates the annual toll to be over [160,000](#). The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) says we're already living in a time "when some miracle drugs no longer perform miracles and families are being ripped apart by a microscopic enemy." Without swift action to reduce antibiotic use, this crisis will only get worse.

We are focused on antibiotic overuse in meat production because that's where nearly two-thirds of the medically important antibiotics are sold in the United States. And the latest FDA ["Summary Report on Antimicrobials Sold or Distributed for Use in Food-Producing Animals"](#) shows that sales of medically important antibiotics to meat producers increased by 8% between 2017 and 2021. We believe that these miracle drugs should only be used to treat sick people

and animals, and we oppose meat producers feeding them to healthy animals to hedge against unsanitary, overcrowded, and stressful industrial farming conditions.

Furthermore, while there are already federal targets to reduce antibiotic misuse in human health care, no such accountability exists in animal agriculture. We urge you to do the following:

Ensure all federal antibiotic sales and use information is housed within a central HHS office ('Mission Control'), funded to analyze both antibiotic use and resistance information across human and animal settings, and environments, and publish fully-integrated annual reports on it.

- **Direct the FDA to robustly collect and analyze antibiotic use information from feed mills.** Around two-thirds of all medically important livestock antibiotics are mixed into animal feed for eventual feeding to groups of animals, even absent signs of infection. Under existing regulations, mills must notify the FDA before distributing feed containing medically important antibiotics, keep veterinary orders with indication and dose information along with records of the amount of feed distributed under each order, and then make these records available to the FDA for inspection. The FDA should require mills to submit these data and then analyze them as a source of information on how and what antibiotics are used on farms.
- **Expand HHS/FDA reporting to include all antibiotic drug sales,** not just livestock sales. Break these sales out by individual state.
- **Work with the EPA to report antibiotic sales each year for non-animal agricultural uses, such as pesticides on crops or orchards.**

Set a national target for reducing antibiotic use in food animal production and a timeline for reaching it.

The European Union [achieved](#) a nearly 50% reduction in antibiotic sales to veterinary medicine in just a decade, so we know major progress is possible if you make it a priority.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

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