

Northwest Food Processors Opposes HB 2598

The federal government is addressing this issue

The Northwest Food Processors Association (NWFPFA) is made up of fruit, vegetable, seafood, nut, bakery, dairy and egg processors. Our members use the raw agricultural crop from Oregon's farmers, and turn it into the final consumer products to be sold in both national and international markets. Our products can be found in any supermarket, convenience store, restaurant or any other venue where packaged food is sold.

HB 2598 would, "eliminate the use of medically important antibiotics on food-producing animals for nontherapeutic purposes." NWFPFA supports this mission because we understand that the uses of antimicrobial drugs, in animals and humans, can contribute to the development of antimicrobial resistance. However, we oppose HB 2598 because this bill will allow for citizen lawsuits to enforce regulation of antibiotics in food-producing animals that is already being addressed at the federal level.

NWFPFA opposes HB 2598 because of the following reasons:

- **The federal government already regulates this activity.** Currently, these products are regulated under the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) label approval process. The FDA has issued a guidance document to change the label to "remove production uses (such as growth enhancement or feed efficiency), and bring the remaining therapeutic uses under veterinary oversight. Once manufacturers voluntarily make these changes, products can no longer be used for production purposes and therapeutic use of these products would require veterinary oversight."
- **FDA is taking steps to phase out this activity.** The FDA is working to, "(a) remove the use of antimicrobial drugs for production purposes; (b) add, where appropriate, scientifically-supported disease treatment, control or prevention uses; and (c) change the marketing status from over-the-counter to Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) for drugs administered through feed or to prescription status for drugs administered through water in order to provide for veterinary oversight or consultation."
- **Citizen law suits not best enforcement tool.** The provision in HB 2598 that allows for citizens to file suit in Marion County Circuit Court completely ignores the work being done by the FDA to phase out this practice. It will needlessly add nuisance law suits to already clogged courts, create unnecessary costs for food producers which gets passed on to consumers, and create a cottage industry of plaintiffs attorneys who fish for these cases.

While NWFPFA agrees with the spirit of the legislation, we are strongly opposed to the State of Oregon implementing a policy in the middle federal action that will phase out this activity. The guidance document #213 on antibiotic use on food-producing animals, released in December 2013, clearly states that this voluntary process needs to be completed within 3 years. We support the actions by FDA and urge all producers to comply with the new regulations. Creating a different set of standards for Oregon only will put us at a complete disadvantage. Furthermore, this exposes Oregon food processors to unneeded and costly legislation that would disrupt their operations and federal action.