

An antibiotic is defined as a medicine that inhibits the growth of, or destroys microorganisms. In veterinary medicine, we are taught to use antibiotics for the treatment of infectious diseases. We are trained to use them in a judicious manner involving proper selection of the drug class, the actual antibiotic, and the individual that we will be using them on. We learn about the risks of antibiotics, the possible side effects and pros and cons of each drug class. Lastly, we learned about antibiotic resistance and how we as veterinarians are on the front line of defense for the prevention of resistance and the development of “superbugs.” I graduated from veterinary school in 2006. It wasn’t until I left the hallowed halls of my school that I came in contact with the rampant misuse of antibiotics in the food animal industry. I tell you this story because when we are in the “ivory tower,” we are not taught to misuse antibiotics. It is the influence of pharmaceutical producers and food animal producers that influences some veterinarians and convinced them that this is an acceptable practice.

One might ask what the benefits of routine antibiotic use in healthy animals are. There are two main benefits. Food animals given low dose antibiotics in their feed are shown to have increased weight gain over those who don’t receive them. This is a good thing, right? But is it more important and more valuable than preventing antibiotic resistance and the development of “superbugs?” There are many scientific organizations that would argue that it is not more important, and I would agree. I want the antibiotics we have available for the treatment of disease to continue to work.

The second reason for routine antibiotic use in healthy food animals is disease prevention. The key word here is “prevention.” Think back to the definition of antibiotics. We want antibiotics to **kill** the infectious organisms that cause disease. If they are given to healthy animals that have low levels of normal bacteria and organisms in them, the antibiotics select for resistant bacteria. This is how we create superbugs. The good news is that we can prevent most disease through proper housing, cleanliness and vaccination. Antibiotics should not be used as a “cheat” to replace proper husbandry.

We have all heard that important and popular part of the medical oath, “First do no harm.” By giving antibiotics to animals for any reason besides treatment of an abnormal infection, we are doing the animals, ourselves and our future, great harm. It is because of this, that I support Senate Bill 920. I believe Senate Bill 920 is the right choice for Oregon because it is more proactive than the Federal Government’s action on antibiotics which is likely to be ineffective. It does not address all of the inappropriate uses of antibiotics in food animals as Senate Bill 920 does so effectively.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cierra Buer, DVM

Powell Butte, OR 95553

[CierraBuer@gmail.com](mailto:CierraBuer@gmail.com)

(541)430-5073

OVMA and AVMA Member