

Oregon Veterinary Medical Association

**Senate Bill 920
Oppose**

April 6, 2015

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair Kruse and Committee Members:

As medical professionals, veterinarians are concerned about antimicrobial resistance and the possible threats to human, animal, and environmental health. However, regardless of how well-intentioned Senate Bill 920 may be, we do not support the legislation for many reasons.


First, Senate Bill 920 creates a definition of “non-therapeutic purpose” for use of antimicrobials that includes disease prevention. Equating “non-therapeutic purpose” with disease prevention is a false premise that is counter to sound veterinary science. If veterinarians were to adhere strictly to this guiding principle, animal health would be compromised and antibiotic resistance would be encouraged – something proponents of the bill indicate they want to prevent.

Veterinarians have the most extensive training than anyone with regard to antibiotic efficacy, resistance, and residues in food production. The number of animals to be treated, why and when they should be treated, and the duration of treatment with therapeutic antibiotics should be directed by the trained professional – the veterinarian – and not by ill-informed legislation.

Second, antibiotics are used in food-producing animals in three ways:

- To prevent and treat certain disease conditions;
- To control certain bacterial infections; and
- With doses, to improve growth and efficiency.

The Food and Drug Administration, which has oversight of antibiotic use in food-producing animals, has declared that the use of antibiotics for growth promotion, weight gain, and feed efficiency is non-therapeutic. As a result, changes to the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) that become effective in December 2016 will prohibit



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this practice. This directly answers concerns raised in Section 1, lines 21 and 22 of SB 920.

It also is important to note that change to the VFD is not designed to limit appropriate (therapeutic) use of antibiotics. Instead, it will increase veterinary oversight to help ensure that the right antibiotics are targeted toward appropriate pathogens at the correct dosages.

Third, science tells us that antibiotic use in food animals is only one of many pressures that could cause resistance to emerge and spread. The issue of resistant bacteria is complex and not a simple concern that SB 920 seems to imply. For example, antibiotic-resistant bacteria are found in meat from livestock raised with *and* without exposure to antibiotics. Furthermore, studies cannot quantify the extent to which antibiotic use in animals might be causing resistant infections in people. But we know what is being done nationally to address concerns and minimize overall risk.

There has been ongoing collaboration among the FDA, USDA, the Center for Veterinary Medicine, and the CDC to address these concerns. (As part of this shared concern, the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System for Enteric Bacteria is inclusive of state and local public health departments). Each federal agency advocates for quantitative assessment of antimicrobial use in food-producing animals and with assessment that is science-based and actionable. These agencies have the experts in the field to achieve this.

SB 920, on the other hand, would merely establish a repository of information with the Oregon Health Authority – and nothing more. The legislation does not call for an assessment of the data by experts, and nothing is actionable.

For these reasons the OVMA is against SB 920 and asks that each of you also oppose the legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chuck

Chuck Meyer, DVM
President



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Note: The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association is a nonprofit professional organization of 1,000 members across all counties in the state and representing all disciplines of the profession, from private clinical practice to public health to education to regulatory medicine and industry.