

Protecting Antibiotics

Selected Endorsements:



And family farms from across Oregon including: Cattail Creek Lamb, Anslie Farms, Phoenix Farm Enterprises, Red Bird Acres, Willow Witt Ranch, Butler Creek Farm, Tangled Orchard Farm and more.

Problem

If you're like most Oregonians, you or your kids have probably relied on antibiotics to treat an illness. Maybe it was a simple infected cut or strep throat. Or maybe you, or someone in your family, had to rely on antibiotics to treat a potentially life-threatening illness like pneumonia or a post-surgery infection.

Unfortunately, these life-saving drugs are losing their effectiveness due to overuse, which has grave consequences for public health. The CDC estimates that each year, 2 million Americans become infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria and at least 23,000 die as a result.

Large factory farms are a significant contributor to the spread of antibiotic resistance. In fact, up to 70 percent of antibiotics sold in the United States are used on livestock, and not primarily to treat sick animals. Instead, antibiotics are put into the daily feed of healthy animals to prevent disease in animals that are not sick.

As a result, bacteria commonly present on farms are evolving into stronger, antibiotic-resistant strains. These germs, sometimes called "superbugs", can then find their way to the human population through numerous pathways, including contaminated food, airborne dust blowing off farms, and water and soil polluted with contaminated feces.

Solution

To protect antibiotics and combat the spread of drug-resistant bacteria, antibiotics for food animals should be used sparingly and only on sick animals or to contain verified disease outbreaks.

1. Prohibit giving medically important antibiotics to healthy farm animals in Oregon. Healthy humans aren't supposed to take antibiotics; neither should healthy farm animals. The measure has exceptions for when there is a significant need to control the spread of disease or around medical procedures. To keep the measure focused on the vast majority of farm animals, the bill is limited to cattle, swine and poultry; the state is empowered to add additional animals by rule.

2. Require disclosure of how medically important antibiotics are used on factory farms. Because the bills would still allow for some antibiotic use on healthy animals, it is important to track that use. The bills will require EPA-defined Large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) to annually disclose the details of their antibiotic use on their farm animals, and make that information public record. This provision would affect just over 100 Oregon farms.

3. Limit the role of the government. Authorizes the Oregon Department of Agriculture to enact additional rules to enforce the law, but only requires the state to design and collect the aforementioned CAFO annual report.

Positions of Medical & Scientific Organizations on Antibiotic Use in Livestock Operations



"The problem arises when drugs used for food production are medically important for human health, as evidence shows that pathogens that have developed resistance to drugs in animals can be transmitted to humans." [Full statement and policy recommendations](#)



"Antibiotics are widely used in food-producing animals, and according to data published by FDA, there are more kilograms of antibiotics sold in the United States for food-producing animals than for people. This use contributes to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in food-producing animals. Resistant bacteria in food-producing animals are of particular concern because these animals serve as carriers." [Link](#) (2013 report, pp. 36-37, under "Improving antibiotic use")



"The AMA is opposed to the use of antimicrobials at nontherapeutic levels in agriculture or as pesticides or growth promoters." [Link](#)



"American Nurses Association urges Congress, meat and poultry producers, and bulk purchasers of meat to promptly phase out the non-therapeutic use of medically important antibiotics and the use of fluoroquinolones in poultry." [Link](#) (2004 resolution)



"Clearly, a decrease in the inappropriate use of antimicrobials in human medicine alone is not enough. Substantial efforts must be made to decrease inappropriate overuse of antimicrobials in animals and agriculture as well." [Link](#) (2003 report, p. 207)

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES



"Because of the link between antibiotic use in food-producing animals and the occurrence of antibiotic-resistant infections in humans, antibiotic agents should be used in food-producing animals only to treat and control infectious diseases and not to promote growth or to prevent disease routinely." [Link](#) (2015 report)



"The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA) . . . and/or other measures (including FDA regulations) should be adopted to end use of antibiotics for growth promotion, feed efficiency, and routine disease prevention purposes in animal agriculture and to ensure that these precious drugs are being used wisely in all settings." [Link](#) (2011 report)



"Hence a comprehensive approach to control and ultimately reverse antimicrobial resistance must limit the inappropriate and non-judicious use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine and food production." [Link](#) (2012 comments on proposed FDA rules)

Contact: Charlie Fisher, OSPiRG, 206-853-5725, cfisher@ospirg.org