

retailer FAQs about consumer demand for “raised without” products

Q Shouldn't food retailers stock “non-antibiotic” meat, milk and eggs in order to cash in on the booming organics market?

A Only upon careful consideration of the consequences. The [organics market](#) may be experiencing fast growth, but it's not necessarily sustainable growth. Here's why: Virtually all consumer studies show consumers buy organic food because [they believe](#) they're investing in a healthier alternative to conventional foods. However, there's no scientific basis for that belief. Retailers who over-allocate their meat-case to chase that paradox in consumer behav-

ior risk a backlash if consumers catch on.

“[Organic-lite](#)” products like “raised without antibiotic” meat, milk and eggs are even more vulnerable, because they have neither the scientific support to claim they're safer nor the high-quality cachet of true organics. Instead, they're a stopgap which carry a high risk for sowing distrust if consumers begin to conclude they've been sold an empty marketing claim.

Q No proven health benefit to ending the use of antibiotics in food production? But I've heard over and over that antibiotics used in farm animals make human antibiotics less effective.

A The most objective look at the broad issue of antibiotic resistance in humans demonstrates all uses of the products may have potential to contribute to resistance. However, in the case of on-farm uses, [expert consensus indicates](#) that contribution is very minor and may actually involve less than 5 percent. Ending on-farm antibiotic use, in fact, runs the risk of making food more prone to bacterial contamination, some scientists believe.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

An all-new consumer survey answers these questions...

- ❑ How important do consumers really consider “antibiotic-free” meat and poultry in terms of the overall shopping experience?
- ❑ Has the anti-farming activist message that using antibiotics in farm animals compromises human health really gained traction, or will consumers abandon retailers who try to bank on it?
- ❑ Who do consumers trust to tell the truth about the wholesomeness of their food?

November 2007

For the Record is a regular publication designed to present facts to balance today's debate over the use of safe, effective, economical methods farmers use to produce your milk, meat and eggs.

Read past issues or link to more information on this issue at www.AntibioticTruths.com

For the Record

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Dear Food Chain Partner:

Talk about the classic best-of-times/worst-of-times scenario: The opportunities to creatively meet the growing demand for high-quality dining and food experiences have never been greater. Freed from want by an economically robust system that meets their food needs for less than 10 percent of income on average, today's shoppers are able to spend more to buy the qualities in food they value.

Unfortunately, that situation has also invited confusion into the market. Political and social activists with far different agendas than their claims might inspire have successfully grafted often radical social goals onto the food-marketing system — with sometimes confusing results.

One example: the new “raised without antibiotics” claims. We believe the science does not support those claims in terms of consumer health or the environment. At the same time, food retailers and restaurateurs who flirt with such ill-defined claims may put themselves in the ultimate position of damaging their hard-won reputations and losing customers. So, [Alpharma Inc.](#) commissioned an extensive national survey of more than a thousand U.S. consumers, to try to give you a better picture of what your customers really believe about this issue. Inside, you'll find an executive summary of the results. And for further details on the issue of antibiotics in food production, visit For the Record on the web at www.antibiotictruths.com.

For the Record

Straight talk about antibiotic use in food animal production presented by ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health

NEW SURVEY FINDS 'ANTIBIOTIC-FREE' NOT AS BANKABLE AS YOU MAY THINK

Roper Public Affairs surveyed 1,001 U.S. consumers in August, discovering some trends that suggest food marketers who too eagerly embrace the “no antibiotic” food label as an easy sell face risks. Here’s what it found:

SALES STORY FAR FROM BULLETPROOF

The research, done for Alpharma to try and validate other consumer data being publicly promoted, sounds a cautionary note to meat retailers not to get too caught up in the giddiness surrounding the growing organics market and assume “raised without antibiotics” claims carry equal weight. Granted, 38 percent of respondents considered it “very important” that meat and poultry they purchase be “antibiotic free,” and just over half identified themselves as “very concerned” over the theoretical risk of becoming more susceptible to disease by inadvertently ingesting antibiotics given animals. However, it doesn’t necessarily follow that consumers support ending antibiotic use: More than 70 percent—and nearly three-quarters of the surveyed women—considered it “very concerning” that sick animals might be used for food if they had not been first treated with antibiotics. Further, bacterial contamination of meat and poultry—the reduction of which is one of the primary benefits of on-farm antibiotic use—was also cited as a concern by seven in 10 respondents.

Similarly, although 39 percent appear to have bought the activist propaganda that over use of farm antibiotics causes food-safety hazards, the percent who considered *under use* a potential food safety hazard was

almost equal, at 35 percent.

The bottom line: As long as farm animals can contract disease, consumers appear reluctant to leave farmers with no safe options for treatment. Implying through an unproved label claim that a meat, milk or egg product is “safer” because a farmer couldn’t use antibiotics may actually create within consumers the very skepticism retailers are trying to avoid.

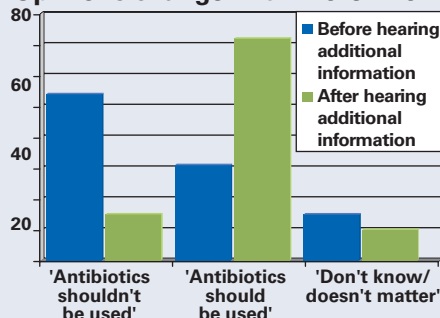
RISKING YOUR CREDIBILITY?

Other consumer studies have concluded that consumers rely less on the details of food production, such as whether or not antibiotics are used, than they do on symbolic trust: trust in the store and in the brand. Results of the Roper study bear out that conclusion. While 45 percent of women say “antibiotic free” is very important in their purchase decision, fully 76 percent ranked store trust as very important. Their willingness to pay a premium was also most dependent not on antibiotic usage, but on store and brand trust.

Yet retailers and food-service providers gamble away that trust when they stock the “raised without antibiotics” products. Why? Consumers buy such products because they believe they’re a healthier alternative. But there’s no science to back that belief—a point the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture just pointed out when it ordered milk processors to *cease labeling milk* as “antibiotic-free” because it’s deceptive. Any initial market power of such claims is vulnerable to rapid erosion as consumers hear of such news. Along with it could follow their trust.

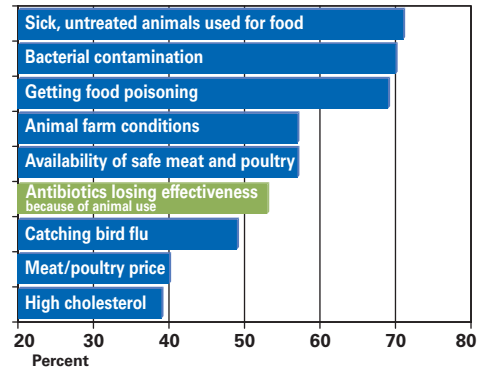
This too shall pass? “Natural” has lost its marketing punch because it’s grown so diluted as to become meaningless. A claim as specific as “antibiotic-free” risks a similar fate because of the ambiguity of its benefits. The Roper research portends that risk. Although 54 percent said they were at least somewhat familiar with the issue of farm antibiotic use, once they were read a series of statements about the disagreement over real value in the claim, fully 73 percent came to feel most comfortable serving food from animals treated *with* antibiotics.

Opinions change with more info...



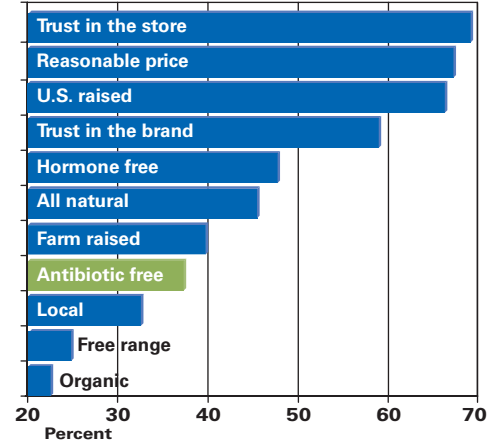
WHERE DOES ANTIBIOTIC USE RANK IN CONCERNS?

Consumers "very concerned" about...



WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE MEAT AND POULTRY BUYS?

"Very important" purchase factors...



Drawing power? Consumers may tell surveyors they want farm antibiotic use limited, but upon further probing, they reveal other, sometimes conflicting, factors that rank much higher.

