

For the Record

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

WHAT BIG MEDIA ISN'T TELLING YOU (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS): THE FACTS

CBS News' two-part series in early February devoting nearly a quarter hour of prime evening news real estate to the "ticking time bomb" of on-farm antibiotic use sensationalized the accusations of activists regarding the issue. But there were a few facts anchor Katie Couric failed to tell your food customers:

CBS reported: Because they use antibiotics to medicate animals, farmers put consumers at risk of contracting Methicillin-Resistant *Staph Aureus* (MRSA) by handling or eating meat.

The facts: Although MRSA has been identified in some hog farms, it's a completely different strain than the dangerous MRSA infecting hospital patients or the one that's common among the population. This milder swine strain has been found in some people working closely with livestock, but there's no evidence to suggest those farmers and workers are infected or suffering disease from it at any higher rate than the general population.

Plus, the antibiotics hog farmers use are not the same antibiotics that cause *Staph* to become resistant. (Methicillin has never been approved for use in U.S. animals.) In fact, the very study CBS cited as evidence of danger itself cautions, "Our data do not allow us to speculate on the relationship between antimicrobial use and MRSA carriage."

CBS reported: Other countries have severely restricted their farmers' ability to medicate animals with antibiotics, and their experience demonstrates a similar ban here would lead to "real and measurable public health benefits—improvements in food safety and...the prevalence of drug resistant infections in people."

The facts: The World Health Organization (WHO)—itself a vocal advocate of such bans—has stated there is zero evidence that Denmark, the country CBS held up as the model of success, has improved public health despite its draconian farm antibiotic bans.

In fact, the rate of human *Salmonella* cases

that are resistant to antibiotics has actually increased since the ban. Denmark is also currently experiencing its largest outbreak of MRSA in its history.

The fact is, far from improving public health, WHO speculated, Denmark's ban probably contributed to the rise in human *Salmonella* resistance. After pig farmers were prohibited from using low levels of antibiotics that are not routinely used by doctors to treat humans, they suffered outbreaks of pig disease that forced them to resort to using more antibiotics that are important to human medicine. That increased need to treat animal disease that was obviously being prevented by "growth promotion" uses of antibiotics, WHO concluded, increased the risk of resistance in human bacterial disease.

CBS reported: Nobody is really watching how farmers use antibiotics, so they over-use them and routinely abuse them.

The facts: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's oversight of farm antibiotics is even more strict than its oversight of human medications. Animal antibiotics are subjected to FDA-directed testing to ensure that meat, milk and eggs from medicated animals are safe to eat, both in the short term and the long term. FDA inspects feed mills that produce medicated feed, and it requires product makers to continually follow up on risk assessment to ensure those drugs don't contribute to human drug failures.

Meanwhile, FDA works with the USDA to conduct tests in processing facilities to make sure those regulations for antibiotic use are followed. The U.S. government also closely watches for emerging trends in the antibiotic resistance CBS expressed concern about through its National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS).

And finally, voluntary farmer and veterinary association programs ensure farmers are educated in careful use and overseen by veterinarians.



DOING THE ACTIVISTS' WORK? While ignoring the voice of scientists who question any real human health value in farm antibiotic bans, the CBS report relied heavily on contributors to organizations that oppose conventional agriculture for ideological reasons, including the PEW Charitable Trusts' anti-"Industrial Farming" campaign.

CBS reported: Farm antibiotics are a ticking time bomb that could someday make treating human disease impossible.

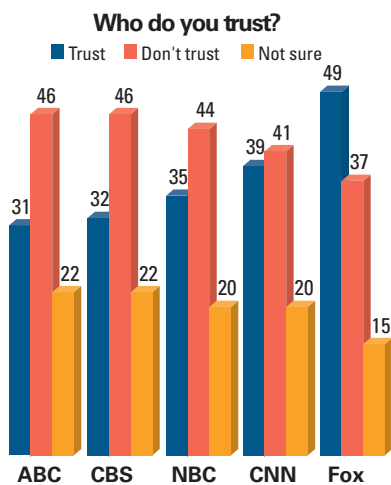
The facts: Drug resistance in food-borne disease is largely a non-issue; in fact, less than 1 percent of food-borne illnesses even require antibiotic treatment. The human-health drug-resistance crisis should focus not on farms, but on hospitals. "Of the more than 2 million hospital-acquired infections per year in the United States," says Ron Jones, MD, primary investigator for the SENTRY Antimicrobial Surveillance Program, "without exception none of the resistant organisms of greatest risk for poor patient therapeutic outcomes are related to food-borne pathogens, nor have food-borne pathogens been documented to have contributed significant risk to patients."

The bottom line CBS ignored: Farm antibiotics are carefully used and pose little risk.

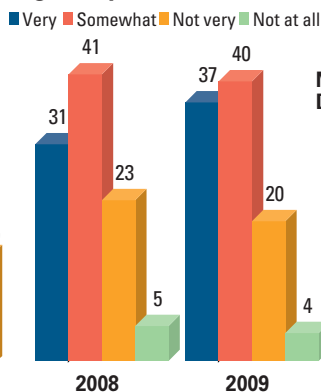
WHO WILL YOUR CUSTOMERS TRUST? THE GOOD NEWS, AND BAD

Although consumers distrust news media like CBS—both in general and for nutrition and health information—they also appear not to trust the retailer for it either, according to new consumer survey data released by the National Grocers Association. Those doubts result from conflicting stories, NGA suggests. Meanwhile, an aging population concerned about nutrition is increasingly using health and nutrition information to select a grocer.

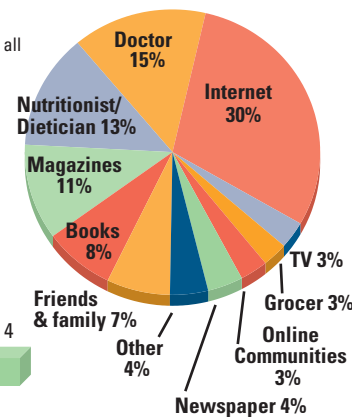
Responding to consumers frightened by the media may tempt you to step up organic and natural marketing. But beware. Skeptical consumers will lose even more of that critical trust when they discover no science supports marketing claims that “antibiotic-free” products are any healthier for them.



Importance of health/nutrition info in choosing a grocery?



Who do you trust most for nutrition information?



Sources: Public Policy Polling national survey of 1,151 registered voters Jan. 18-19, 2010. National Grocers Association 2009 and 2010 Consumer Survey Reports.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Big Media reports like the recent CBS News series on antibiotics in farming are leaving out some important facts.

- ❑ Antibiotics used in food animals do not pose any significant risk to the health of your customers.
- ❑ The European farm antibiotic bans that CBS News promoted as “success stories” have been anything but.

For the Record

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retailer. FAQs about the regulation of farm antibiotics to protect human health

Q But hasn't the U.S. Food & Drug Administration joined in the demand that farmers stop using antibiotics?

A Despite statements before a Congressional committee late last year by one of its senior officials who CBS quoted (statements the agency has been careful to correct), FDA does not support any blanket ban on the use of antibiotics similar to those imposed on European farmers.

Instead, FDA has worked closely with farmers, product makers, veterinarians and research scientists to develop regulations that [attempt to scientifically gauge](#) the specific risk that individual bacteria species, exposed to specific, individual

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antibiotics, might contribute to the failure of human antibiotics to treat disease caused by those bacteria. That careful, scientific process is consistent with a scientific approach to decision making that carefully weighs the risks against the benefits.

The quantitative risk assessments that have been conducted to date demonstrate [no or extremely low risk](#) that people are going to have extra illness because farmers use antibiotics. Sweeping, draconian regulation like Europe's and the one proposed in Congress short circuits that scientific risk-assessment process with no demonstrated benefit to human medicine.

For the Record is a regular publication designed to present facts to balance today's debate over the 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