

For the Record

Straight talk about antibiotic use in food-animal production

Sponsored by ALPHARMA Inc. Animal Health

INSIGHTS ON THE ISSUE

The growing Who's Who of anti-antibiotics: Different names, common agenda

"The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety), by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary."—H. L. Mencken 1922

Facts to prove the theory that drug-resistant bacteria may be transferred to humans through food have been stubborn in revealing themselves to the advocacy groups who champion a ban on using antibiotics in food-producing animals.

Still—proving only half the scientific philosopher's creed that ignoring distasteful facts is both cowardly and fatal—the Who's Who of the advocacy industry continues to grow. One estimate says the number of non-governmental organizations created to change public sentiment about production agriculture now stands at 27,000. That's a four-fold increase in the last decade.

Many take some position against antibiotic use in animals. It's no coincidence that they often list these other causes in their wider agendas:

- Anti-corporate farming.
- Anti-biotechnology.
- Anti-development.
- Anti-private property rights.
- Anti-free trade.
- Pro-social justice.

Noting that Greenpeace, the grand-daddy of environmental organizations, now hires a Chief Financial Officer, the Wall Street Journal has pointed out that attacking big business has itself become big business. Despite the fact that animal-industry groups are routinely attacked for having a profit motive in protecting

the industry, the advocacy groups are themselves well financed by the deep pockets of private-money foundations, often backed by sophisticated media agencies schooled in churning the press to keep the contributions flowing.

Yet, it would be shortsighted to assume it's only about money. The disturbing larger motive underlying the movement is an erosion of freedom.

"...these new dictators are determined to tell everyone what they can and can't eat, drink,

smoke, wear, and even think," writes Richard Berman, head of the Center for Consumer Freedom. The aptly named "Nanny Culture" aims to control personal behavior in the name of protecting society as a whole.

It's a new fragmentation of our society, Former Minnesota Senator George McGovern recently wrote, one "...along the lines that do not break on typical demographics like race, age or income. These new divisions are based on paternalism - what we believe is best for each other."

How low can it go? Cashing in on a national tragedy

Even as rescuers continued heroic efforts to clean up the devastation left by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, crusaders were busy elbowing their way toward the sudden bounty of microphones and reporters.

Animal industry representatives took the newly formed "Keep Antibiotics Working" campaign to the woodshed for implying antibiotic feeding might render the drug Cipro less effective. Cipro was widely reported as the drug of choice for treating anthrax bioterror attacks.

"We have never either stated or implied that use of antibiotics in food animals would make it harder to treat an anthrax...attack," the front for many traditional anti-antibiotic groups quickly responded. But did they? Their initial October press release speaks for itself:

"Recent concerns about bioterrorism underscore the importance of having powerful, effective antibiotics available to treat human diseases... Unfortunately, overuse of antibiotics in both agriculture and medicine is creating infections that resist treatment..."

The release was headlined: "Bayer Urged to Respect FDA Proposed Ban on Using Cipro(R)-Related Drug on Poultry"

In late November, the same source quoted in the press release was busily repeating the guilt-by-association message to USA Today.

Meanwhile, Ohio Congressman Sherrod Brown, a longtime mouthpiece in Washington for banning antibiotic feeding, tried to wedge a \$50 million grant for monitoring and controlling antibiotic resistance into the emergency "homeland defense" supplemental spending bill Congress passed in response to Sept. 11.

Also in this issue:

- The tangled web of organizations bent on restricting freedom on numerous fronts.
- The role of human medical doctors in antibiotic resistance.
- Is anybody on your side in this fight?

For the record

An inconvenient lack of facts to the contrary, the list of advocacy groups attacking your freedom to use antibiotics in livestock grows every year.

Case Study: The widening web of the 'Nanny Culture'

What too often sells itself as a spontaneous grassroots food-safety campaign turns out to be a network of familiar names in the crusading Who's Who. Case in point: the new "Keep Antibiotics Working" Campaign. Formed on

the heels of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, its transparent mission is to leverage panic over Anthrax and its cure, Cipro, to rouse public sentiment against all antibiotic feeding. The campaign illustrates the far-reaching tentacles of what's

been called the "Nanny Culture." It's a sophisticated effort to restrict freedom and free enterprise on numerous fronts, from choices in food and drink to freedom to develop and use private property. Here's how the web is spun.

For the record

The movement to ban antibiotic use in livestock includes a long list of familiar activist "nannies," all dedicated to telling everybody else how to live their lives.



The participating groups:

■ **Center for a Livable Future.**

This Johns Hopkins University-affiliated group is a vocal critic of "industrial animal production" and supporter of small-scale "urban" farming. Its current press: Attempts to link deformed frogs in the Great Lakes to mysterious—and unproven—water pollution.

■ **Center for Science in the**

Public Interest. For three decades, CSPI has run through its PR mill dubious junk-science reports designed to panic the public on soft drinks, fat substitutes, irradiated meat, biotechnology, and others. It was one of the first advocates of taxing foods based on their calorie content—the "Twinkie tax"—claiming obesity, like smoking, was a drain on the medical economy.

■ **Environmental Defense Fund.**

With 300,000 members, the 35-year-old group lobbies to protect the "environmental rights of all people." A principle in the original efforts to ban DDT, Environmental Defense Fund today also advocates licensing livestock lagoons and halting agriculture on lands where endangered species live.

■ **Food Animals Concerns Trust.**

The Chicago animal welfare group has opposed such "factory farming" practices as forced molting in poultry and confinement raising of both hogs and veal calves, and has been vocal in opposing the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals.

■ **Global Resource Action Center for the Environment.** Established in 1996, the GRACE Factory Farm

The aim:

Claiming farm use of antibiotics has bred antibiotic resistance of "crisis proportions," the campaign aims to end the practice by:

- Phasing out the use in healthy animals of any antibiotic that "may become" important to human medicine.
- Restricting all uses of antibiotics "essential" for treating sick humans.
- Providing government and the public with "adequate data" to support conclusions based upon junk science.

Project—in addition to being anti-nuke, anti-global warming, anti-corporate-profit, and behind virtually every United Nations initiative—works to eliminate all "factory farming." At the invitation of local rural citizens, GRACE moves in to frustrate farm startups and expansion through zoning and regulation.

■ **Humane Society of the United States.**

Founded in 1954, the world's largest animal-welfare organization now employs 250 staff members to oppose, among others, any system that treats livestock as "...mere commodities rather than social, intelligent creatures who are capable of great suffering."

■ **Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.**

Founded in 1986 to oppose industrial agriculture, IATP lobbies U.S. companies to limit trading to organic foods, like "Peace Coffee," (in which, coincidentally, the group's principles have a financial interest). The group has been a vocal critic of biotechnology like StarLink corn.

■ **National Catholic Rural Life**

Conference. The 70-year-old Des Moines-based organization calls for

a ban on confinement hog and poultry farming, noting that farming should be left in the hands of "God-fearing families," operated to benefit neighboring brothers and sisters first; as a business, second.

■ **Natural Resources Defense**

Council. The driving force behind the 1989 Alar apple panic that cost that industry \$250 million, NRDC has today set most of its sights on genetically improved food.

■ **Physicians for Social**

Responsibility. Advocating the abolition of meat, milk and eggs for food, the group has been called nothing but "an animal-rights front organization" by the American Medical Association.

■ **Sierra Club.** The media darling of the environmental movement, the group's list of shalt-nots includes public lands grazing, logging, global warming, and—lately—biotech corn.

■ **Union of Concerned Scientists.**

USA Today's "greenest of US environmental groups..." , UCS wants consumers to protect the environment by living in smaller houses, traveling less or not at all, and cutting meat consumption in half.

Where are the real priorities in preventing resistance?

One estimate attributes about 5 percent of antibiotic resistance in humans to the use of antibiotics in farm animals. What causes the rest?

The World Health Organization—which, incidentally, supports restricting the use of antibiotics in food animals—has identified these other priorities to address in beating worldwide antibiotic resistance:

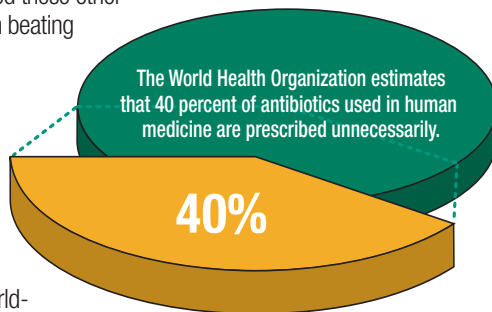
■ **Poverty.** More than any other issue, says WHO, inadequate access to drugs directly caused by poverty is the major force in worldwide resistance. Too often, the world's poor must resort to cheap counterfeit medicine or end treatment with real drugs too soon, before the disease is cured. Instead of wiping out the infection altogether, those medications kill only non-resistant organisms—leaving their tougher, resistant counterparts to flourish.

■ **Misdiagnosis.** In both developing and industrialized nations, problems in the public health systems often cause misdiagnosis that contributes to antibiotic resistance. Overworked, under-informed, and poorly equipped healthcare workers inevitably turn to “defensive” prescribing to hedge themselves against potential complications. Symptom-based guesswork increases the likelihood of prescribing the wrong medication. For instance, it's been estimated that U.S. and Canadian physicians over-prescribe antibiotics by 50 percent.

■ **Counterfeit Drugs.** The \$21 billion worth of fake and pirated drugs sold annually risk human health directly, as well as encourage resistance. Counterfeits, when they contain any antibiotics at all, often contain less than recommended concentrations. That under-dosing encourages selection for resistance.

■ **Shotgun dosing and high-priced prescriptions.** Ironically, a fear of resistance often encourages doctors to avoid the narrow-

spectrum drugs that treat specific complaints, choosing instead broader-spectrum antibiotics that have wider applications—and which also may contribute to resistance in non-target organisms. In addition, WHO says, health-care providers in poorer countries sometimes earn a



commission for recommending those more expensive broader-spectrum medications.

■ **Misguided demand.** In developed countries, patient demand for antimicrobials also encourages resistance. A 1997

European study found the No. 1 reason doctors prescribed the wrong antibiotic for a disease was patient pressure. In this country, 70 percent of doctors in one study said they had prescribed a drug they might not have otherwise because of patient pressure, in many cases driven by consumer advertising.

■ **Under-education.** In poor nations, consumers have broad access to drugs over the counter, without adequate knowledge to use them. And even in richer countries, WHO says, antibiotic resistance is given only passing glance in medical schools.

■ **Hospitals.** WHO cites an analysis of 10 studies done at teaching hospitals worldwide, in which between 40 percent and 91 percent of antibiotics were inappropriately prescribed. The survey also showed widespread disregard among hospital workers for basic hygiene practices that interrupt the spread of antibiotic-resistant organisms.

Canada's success story: Emphasize cooperation and responsible use



Intent on panicking the public into outlawing the 6 percent of U.S. antibiotics used to improve farm-animal productivity, the Nanny Culture falls strangely silent when it comes to the world's success story in fighting antibiotic resistance.

Canada's National Information Program on Antibiotics brought together a coalition of doctor and pharmaceutical groups in 1996. The program was designed to focus consumer and physician awareness on improving drug use in humans, not animals.

Using consumer print and radio advertising, coupled with patient and doctor educational materials, NIPA and its drug-company sponsor put the message in front of more than 3 million Canadian drug consumers that only smart drug use will ensure those products remain effective.

The result: Antibiotic resistance rates of the common *Streptococcus pneumoniae* have decreased more than 4 percent since 1998—even while the worldwide average predicted a 100 percent increase. A national poll showed that almost eight in 10 doctors had changed prescribing habits after the campaign—18 percent at the request of their patients.

“...it is clear that the largest impact we can have in containing and reducing the risk of resistance is in alerting patients, pharmacists and physicians of the role they can all play in making sure the antibiotics we have remain effective,” said one of the country's leading professors of pediatric medicine.

For the record

Misuse of human drugs in humans represents a disproportionately large share of the causes behind development of antibiotic resistance.

For the record

Canada has dramatically improved resistance rates by focusing not on farm animals, but on human antibiotic use.

Why we sponsor For the Record

As consumers grow further and further removed from the realities of livestock production, it is clear that companies involved in food production must assume more responsibility for



Carol Wrenn, ALPHARMA Inc.

educating them on important scientific issues. They must see that protecting your freedom to use the important production tools of antibiotics, anticoccidials and antibacterials in feed is absolutely necessary to meet the world's growing demand for safe, affordable protein.

Our sponsorship of For the Record illustrates ALPHARMA's commitment. We believe con-

sumers want the good news that their food is safe. They want to understand the benefits of better science. It's time that all of us committed to the future of affordable animal production become active in how we communicate that message. It's time to set the record straight.

Carol Wrenn, President ALPHARMA Inc. Animal Health

MEDIA RELATIONS THAT GET YOUR STORY OUT

Pull at the threads of junk science

When speaking out against the illogical attacks on using antibiotics in farm animals, one effective tool is to pick apart junk science by applying these simple questions any good scientist asks, from Dr. Dade W. Moeller, Professor Emeritus at Harvard University:

- Have the advocates detailed their research methods? Did they start with a precise theory that could be tested by repeated, objective observation?
- Have the advocates proposed—and demonstrated—a clear cause and effect? Clues that they haven't include generalities such as "may influence," "associated with," and "relative risk."

- Did they include all data? True science changes theory to fit the data; it doesn't discard inconvenient data.
- Are the advocates citing data from scientific studies, or subjective observation? A favorite tactic of the media, for instance, junk science often cites testimonials and anecdotes as evidence of some wider trend.
- Have the advocates collected valid data? Inflated farm antibiotic usage

- data are a classic example of invalid assumptions leading to poor conclusions. Advocates assume all animals are given the maximum labeled dose of approved medications.
- Have the advocates honestly considered and dealt with other possible explanations for the effect?
- Has the science been reviewed by peers of the advocates—preferably those who have given it a critical eye?

Coming in the next issue of For the Record:

- Fact vs. fiction: How incorrect assumptions by the advocates misstate the problem.
- Natural foods or natural poisons: the myth of organics as a safe alternative to modern food production practices.
- Tips on how to better make yourself the voice of reason.

For the Record

Attacking your freedom to use antibiotics has become a profitable cottage industry for many individuals and groups. This series, sponsored by a grant from ALPHARMA, is designed to help unite the industry and protect our ability to provide healthy supplies of meat, milk, poultry and eggs to our customers. Accomplishing that end requires an understanding of the real agenda behind the consumer-panic industry, and a willingness to set the record straight. Questions or comments? Contact Karen.DeQuasie@Alpharma.com.

WORKING TOGETHER WE CAN SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Who is on your side?

- **Center for Consumer Freedom.** A coalition made up primarily of restaurant and tavern owners, CCF began in response to attacks on consumer choices in the areas of smoking, drinking and eating. Their efforts, including magazine advertising and web sites, aim to "shine the light on these groups [so], like fungus, they'll dry up and blow away," according to the group's Director of Communication. www.consumerfreedom.com
- **American Council on Science and Health.** Founded in 1978 to advocate the use of sound science in policy making, ACSH's board of 350 doctors, scientists and advisors balances with scientific fact the inflammatory media coverage of smoking, AIDS, alcohol, nutrition, the environment, drug safety, biotechnology, food safety, and other topics. www.acsh.org
- **ALPHARMA.** As the nation's premier source of medicated feed additives, ALPHARMA has committed to supporting your freedom to use those compounds, through continued research and development, promotion of prudent use, funding of producer education, and fighting junk science with facts. www.alpharma.com/ahd
- **Coalition for Animal Health,** an alliance representing livestock and poultry producers, veterinarians, pet owners, and animal drug and feed makers. Formed in the early 1990s to fight for changes to FDA's inefficient approval process for needed animal drugs, the group now serves as a unified voice in opposing irrational changes in animal-health regulation. www.ahi.org