

# For the Record

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

## THE ISSUE'S NOT GONE, IT'S ONLY GONE LOCAL

The secret to success in politics, it's been said, is cultivating a short memory. What passes as crisis in Washington one week becomes stale panic the next, once the attention-deficit media find a new issue to replace it. Case in point: The use of antibiotics to produce meat, milk and eggs. Four to five years ago, the rising tide of unanimous bad press, activist antics and legislative posturing made it look as if it would make a ban on the 50-year-old, safe practice a done deal. Yet for the anti-technology opponents still beating that drum today, it takes a conscious amnesia to ignore the string of victories agriculture has achieved, including:

■ For the third session in a row, it appears **proposed legislation in Congress** to impose severe, unscientific limits on the use of antibiotics for purposes other than individual animal treatment will smother under lack of attention. The bills in both the Senate and the House remain under review in committees of both chambers, where they have been sent to die in past sessions.

■ Despite its positioning as an "emergency" by those

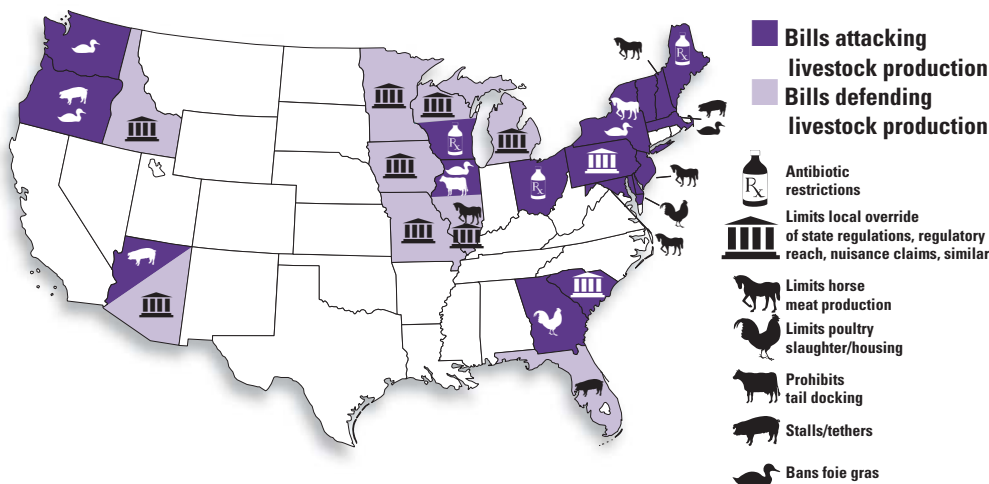
involved, a **petition filed by three activist groups** and two medical associations in April 2005 to force FDA to immediately rescind approval for most antibiotics used for growth promotion in food animals has yet to be acted upon. The coalition attempted to claim seven classes of antibiotics in feed were no longer safe by taking advantage of a technicality in FDA regulations after the agency changed its policy in 2004 regarding how drug makers should test the safety of their products.

Does this mean we're winning? Yes. And no. Unfortunately, like water, the deceptiveness of anti-agriculture activists seeks its own level, finding every weakness in the levees of science and logic. In the case of this issue, those weak points may now be members of state and even local regulatory bodies. Unaware of—or uninterested in—the logical arguments against the activist rhetoric, they may be more free to operate below the national scrutiny of their federal counterparts. Thus, they present activists a softer target of opportunity. The issue's not gone—it's only gone local.

## THE TAIL — OR NOSE — OF A TREND?

What may seem at first glance like only a handful of actions at the state level to impose restrictions on animal antibiotic use is closely connected to a much wider movement to control other unfashionable ani-

mal-agricultural practices. Several states are currently involved in legislation either to impose restrictions on animal agriculture or to enact preemptive legislation to prevent them.



### Also in this issue

- A handful of state legislatures have considered bills related to animal antibiotic use
- In the wider scope, what areas of animal production can we expect to come under attack? Here's what the activists plan
- Why your future may be related to the fate of duck producers and veal farms

### For the record...

Don't believe the lack of national news headlines about antibiotic use in agriculture means the issue's gone away. In many cases, it's only gone local.

# STATE-LEVEL ACTIONS AGAINST ANTIBIOTICS

Activists who would call on the federal government to summarily end your ability to use safe, approved levels of antibiotics in food production have now begun to cultivate state and local regulators, too. They believe a victory at the statehouse or county zoning board level can give them impact that reaches far beyond geography by setting precedents they can then promote as the new standard in other locales, ultimately creating a sham “grassroots” demand for action they can’t achieve at a federal level. Recent examples include these states:

## MAINE

Introduced in early 2005 by Senator Scott Cowger, [Maine L.D. 1126](#) would have officially recognized Maine’s state policy as discouraging the nontherapeutic use of antibiotics in animals raised for food. It would have required food buyers for state institutions and schools to notify vendors of the policy and then give preference in buying to those who could supply meat from animals that had not been given antibiotics for anything but individual animal disease treatment.

Had the legislation passed in that form, according to the legislature’s [economic-impact estimate](#), compliance would have been expensive if not impossible, because the current supplier could not ensure enough “organic” meat to adequately supply the state’s facilities. Had enough been available, it would have increased the state’s cost for the 82,000 pounds of ground beef it buys annually from the current \$1.14 to \$1.40 per pound to \$3.75 per pound. It would have spiked the University of Maine’s dining services bill by \$2.4 million per year, according to the estimate. And because the university’s dining services are not funded by the state, the increase would have fallen hardest on students, adding an overnight 11 percent increase to the cost of each student’s meal plan.

As finally signed into law by the governor in June, the bill survived as only a resolution ordering the state’s commissioner of agriculture and health-bureau director to “examine ways to reduce the use of antibiotics in the animal industry with the goal of maintaining the therapeutic efficacy of antibiotics.” That action consists of convening a study group composed of state farm organizations, a veterinary association, an infectious-disease specialist and a pediatrician, to study the issue and possibly make recommendations for future actions

## OHIO

Introduced in February 2005 by Democrat Robert Hagan, from Youngstown, [Ohio Senate Bill 73](#) would prohibit school districts, educational service centers or community schools from spending state funds or district revenues to buy any poultry products from birds that have been treated with any fluoroquinolone. It would also tax medicated-feed sales to fund a mandatory system requiring distributors, manufacturers and retailers to report data on their sales of antibiotics intended to be used in livestock. The State Board of Pharmacy would then be required to publish the data on its Internet Web site.

The bill was referred to the state’s Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee almost immediately upon introduction, where it has stayed since.

## ‘They came for the duck liver, and I said nothing...’

Almost absurdly narrow examples of the movement to gain incremental control by localizing the fight over animal agriculture include these developments:

■ Chicago’s city council just passed a [resolution that will end](#) the sale of the delicacy foie gras within city limits, claiming the practice is cruel to ducks from which it comes. Similar legislation has just been introduced in Philadelphia, as well, and several states are arguing a ban.

■ Arizona, Oregon and Massachusetts have considered bills that would have regulated or banned individual stalls for veal calves.

According to the [American Veal Association](#), the number of commercial formula- or milk-fed veal operations that stand to be impacted by the legislation in those three states: zero.

■ The same three states are also considering bans or restrictions on individual stalls or tethers for sows. At the same time, [Florida is considering](#) revising its referendum process and removing the embarrassing and election-fraud-ridden ballot measure there in 2002 that outlawed crates on all two of Florida’s remaining commercial hog operations.

It may be easy for livestock producers to ignore an arcane practice like duck feeding that produces a delicacy like foie gras, but we do so at our own peril, advises Marcus Henley, operations manager at [Hudson Valley Foie Gras](#), one of only three remaining U.S. commercial producers of foie gras.

“We are just an easy entry point,” he tells *For the Record*, “a place for animal rights organizations to establish a beach head. But if it is OK to ban foie gras for whatever reason, then we can find a good reason to ban any other agricultural product on just about any pretext. For instance: ‘City council bans Texas chickens because some of the labor producing them is illegal immigrants from Mexico.’”

Animal rights groups like PETA and the Humane Society of the United States, which actively criticize antibiotic use, understand and apply that philosophy masterfully. Insisting they’re only interested in “reform” of the worst “abuses,” they attempt to turn segments of the food system against one another by muddying the fact we’re all aligned in the same goal: providing safe, affordable, healthy food by providing world-class animal care. Meanwhile, their ultimate aim remains clear, as PETA president Ingrid Newkirk announced at the group’s Animal Rights 2002 convention: “There is no hidden agenda. If anybody wonders about, ‘What’s this with all these reforms?’ you can hear us clearly. Our goal is total animal liberation.”



Several city and state legislators have jumped on the easy publicity train of banning production of foie gras from ducks.

## WISCONSIN

A similar but broader bill in Wisconsin, [Assembly Bill 837](#) would have mandated state agencies, school districts and technical college districts to give preference in purchasing chicken, turkey, beef or pork products to suppliers who could provide meat from animals that had not been given antibiotics for other than treatment of disease.

Introduced in November 2005 by Rep. Sondy Pope-Roberts, a Democrat representing Madison, the bill, according to the [fiscal impact study](#) conducted as part of the bill's consideration, would have potentially increased the cost of state school systems' food services by 20 percent to 50 percent. It would have cost the University of Wisconsin system alone a conservatively estimated \$1.6 million more annually.

No surprise then, the study concluded, that because the bill would allow schools to opt out of going organic if prices were not comparable, it was highly unlikely to lead to any changes in purchasing practices, unless amended to ignore price.

It failed in May.

## Where does the 'Ultimate Authority' stand?

One important source of non-governmental local authority has involved itself in the movement against agricultural antibiotics: the church. These religious organizations have endorsed federal legislation that would ban most uses:

- [Adrian Dominican Sisters](#)
- [Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe Ecology Ministry Social Justice Office](#)
- [Archdiocese of Dubuque Rural Life Office](#)
- [Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Louisville](#)
- [Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island Environment Committee](#)
- [Catholic Charities Diocese of Sioux City](#)
- [Minnesota Catholic Conf.](#)
- [Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces](#)
- [United Church of Christ Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility](#)
- [Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry, School Sisters of Notre Dame](#)
- [National Catholic Rural Life Conference \(also a founding member of Keep Antibiotics Working campaign\)](#)
- [Cumberland Countians \(Tenn.\) for Peace & Justice](#)

## For the Record Web Bonus

Looking for your state representatives? Visit us online at [www.alphaaah.com](http://www.alphaaah.com) to find a list of statehouse telephone numbers and Web home pages.

## WATCH OUT FOR THESE LOCAL PRESSURES

Almost 360 activist, environmental and other organizations endorse federal legislation that would severely limit food-animal antibiotic use. That army of people across the states is busy lobbying your legislators, commissioners and even local school boards. Here's a list of some proposed pressure points activists plan to attack:

### SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES

- ✓ Distributing "sustainable farming" propaganda masquerading as [educational materials](#) or teacher-support packets.
- ✓ Staging "teach-ins"—obtaining an invitation to present on school, library or hospital events calendars.
- ✓ Requesting or petitioning school-lunch administrators, school boards or PTAs to only serve meat raised without antibiotics or produced organically.

### MARKETS, RESTAURANTS AND OTHER RETAILERS

- ✓ Leafleting customers in and around supermarkets about supposed "dangers" of antibiotics. Should yours be a target, voice support to the manager for keeping sanity in procurement policy.
- ✓ Urging store managers to sell organic, all-natural or "sustainably raised" meat, milk and eggs. Again, make clear you support retailers who truly expand consumer choice by continuing to offer cost-effective conventional foods alongside the fad foods.
- ✓ Making exaggerated claims at farmers markets. There's no good science to support any health claims around organic foods. But that doesn't stop many vendors. Public farmers markets are often subsidized by local governments, giving you a mechanism to urge their vendors comply with regulations.

### STATE AND LOCAL LEGISLATURES

- ✓ Legislating requirements that stores display whether their meat, milk and eggs have been raised using antibiotics.



When you see well-produced, printed materials at local hearings, you can suspect a [national organization like GRACE](#) is actively working in your area.

- ✓ Legislating requirements that city- or state-funded hospital, school and other institutional food-service facilities give preferential purchasing to food raised without antibiotics.
- ✓ Legislating "user fees" on animal-feed sales, typically to fund research and publicity on less-effective alternatives to antibiotics.
- ✓ Legislating outright bans.
- ✓ Requiring collection of antibiotic sales data.

### COUNTY, ZONING AND DNR-PERMITTING BOARDS

- ✓ Tracking applications for new construction or expansion permits, and getting on the hearing schedule to speak in opposition.
- ✓ Threatening planned or expanding farms in the neighborhood, promising to have your property "independently appraised" before and after the farm begins operation, and then suing for the difference.

## For the record...

Failing to achieve their legislative aims at the federal level, activists are working against antibiotic use and other farming technology on several fronts. Be on the lookout for these common pressure points.

### For the record...

Legislative involvement is probably low on your to-do list. But it has become more critical than ever to let politicians know what the grassroots is thinking.

### For the Record,

sponsored by a grant from ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health, is designed to help unite the industry and provide a unified, rational message on behalf of producers whose freedom to use safe, effective, economical production methods is at stake. Working together, we can set the record straight on antibiotics.

Do you have questions or comments? E-mail [Steve Kopperud](mailto:Steve.Kopperud@skopperud.poldir.com) at [skopperud@skopperud.poldir.com](mailto:skopperud@skopperud.poldir.com) or editor [Mike Smith](mailto:Mike.Smith@CustomMedia@Food360.com) at [CustomMedia@Food360.com](mailto:CustomMedia@Food360.com). Want to read past issues or link to more information on this issue? Visit us online at [www.alpharmaah.com](http://www.alpharmaah.com).

## THE POWER STILL LIES IN THE GRASSROOTS

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When you consider how much different the average livestock producer's workday is from most of today's anti-agricultural activists, it's no wonder you have little time left for something as seemingly unimportant as involvement in the legislative process. Where you work long and irregular hours, they're usually on a 9-to-5 day that makes it easier for an organization to find them, round them up and schedule them for political action. Where producers often remain tied to the operation year-round by its day-to-day demands, activists typically have several weeks annual vacation to schedule a trip to Washington, if needed. You're located in far-off "Flyover Country," they're concentrated in the urban centers where lawmakers also tend to congregate.

Farming's very nature seems to conspire to distance you from the people who make the laws that impact your livelihood. It's critical producers at the grassroots actively involve themselves. How do you compete with these groups? Try these suggestions:

■ **Emphasize the long-lasting relationship.** Your representatives in Washington, D.C., in particular, but also your state representatives, get literally flooded these days with diverging ideas and issues, many routinely churned out by hired public relations machines and association staffers who are just doing a job. Yet it's easy to forget sometimes that representatives

are people, too. Many were farmers, small-business people, teachers—and they're thus often tied as closely to the local community as you are. That means they respond first to people, and that relationships count.

■ **Become a trustworthy resource.** Every contact with a representative doesn't have to involve "an ask," as they call it in Washington. If you prove yourself a dependable source of information on farm issues, you may eventually find legislators coming to you for background and advice.

■ **Don't neglect the staff.** A legislator's staff members become trusted advisors themselves, depended upon to help sort through the mountain of information and requests that comes into the offices and to give them tools they need to make good decisions. Cultivating relationships with them can be as effective as with the legislators themselves.

■ **Invite them to visit.** Let's face it, legislators love photo opportunities today, and despite what activists like to say about production agriculture, farming remains one of the most photogenic occupations. What better way to get a captive audience than invite a legislator to tour your operation?

■ **Stay close with your professional associations, too.** Those of us who represent you also rely on you to be our sentinels in the field, to alert us to developments while they're in the early stages, and easier to head off. If you're ever in doubt, don't hesitate to contact your association.

## WORK THE VALUE OF PERSONAL RELATIONS

Anti-agriculture activist groups like the Global Resource Alliance Center for the Environment (GRACE) have made a new industry out of using the Internet, automated phone banks, canned literature and other instantaneous communication tools to apply national tools to local issues. Whenever you see slick presentations, canned letters and glossy printed anti-"factory-farming" posters or brochures showing up at a local zoning board meeting, you can bet [GRACE or another organization using its model](#) has been contacted for help. That new-age activism makes it more critical than ever that producers cultivate the one thing GRACE can never counterfeit: true local, personal relationships. In the age of online, one-click petitions and fill-in-the-blank letters that stink of impersonalization, it's not just a matter of informing your legislators of the importance of your production practices and their impact, but of cultivating them—becoming a trusted advisor who, most importantly, won't abandon them when the press turns against them. Here are some suggestions:

■ **Treat it as any other professional relationship.** Although it's less true at a local level than a national level, still many people are intimidated by the thought of talking directly with an elected representative. It shouldn't be, any more so than meeting with your veterinarian or your banker. Treat it as simply an opportunity to give them something they can get nowhere else—unique perspective on an issue that will help them appeal to a wider portion of their constituency. Remember, you have

something they need: The ability to gain support.

■ **Encourage others to do the same.** One single meeting from a constituent can make an impact on a legislator; however, he or she is still only one legislator. To really effect action, the same thing has to be repeated across a state, with each legislator being adopted by another constituent.

■ **Always work to open up, not close down, the relationship.** Human nature makes it hard to do, but even with representatives who regularly disappoint, the aim should be to keep the dialog open. Angry letters, ultimatums and threats, and less-than-honest claims will only encourage them to ignore you.

■ **Pick your battles.** No representative votes your way 100 percent of the time. Pick and choose the battles that are worth going to the mat on, and those on which you can compromise to preserve the relationship.

■ **Do it today.** Political support may be the most perishable of all commodities. Make hay while the sun's shining.

■ **Establish a relationship by meeting face to face** before relying on communication through letters, e-mail and phone calls.

■ **Always take the meeting.** In the case of your national representatives, the first meeting you request with a representative will often be not with the representative but with a staff member. Don't consider this a slight. Consider it instead an opportunity to cultivate that relationship and get in the door. Staff members have the representative's ear, and they can thus be a powerful ally.