

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Minority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives  
1705 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks  
Ranking Member, House Appropriations  
Committee  
2467 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr  
Ranking Member, House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
1126 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2012

Dear Representative,

Our coalition of health, medical, science, environment, consumer, veterinary, and conservation organizations are writing to seek your help in ensuring no Congressional action is taken that will limit or undermine FDA's ability to take stronger action to curb the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in our nation's meat and poultry supply. Antibiotic resistance is compromising the effectiveness of essential human medicines, leading to longer illnesses, more hospitalizations, and deaths when treatments fail.

The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science has warned that "[t]he specter of untreatable infections - a regression to the pre-antibiotic era - is looming just around the corner" if antibiotic resistance is not addressed. Incidence data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for 2005 suggest that just one kind of antibiotic resistant pathogens, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), killed nearly 19,000 Americans, more than HIV/AIDS in that year. A CDC-funded study indicates that antibiotic resistance in the United States results in up to \$26 billion a year in excess healthcare costs and up to \$35 billion a year in total societal costs.

The overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture to promote faster growth and to compensate for crowded and unsanitary conditions is a critical contributor to this problem. According to the CDC, the scientific literature "establish[es] a clear link between antibiotic use in animals and antibiotic resistance in humans" and "there is a compelling body of evidence to demonstrate this link." Major medical and public health organizations, such as the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the American Public Health Association, reiterate the clear scientific evidence linking the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in food animals and the spread of antibiotic resistance.

In March and again in early June, a federal court directed FDA to take action to end these practices when they are not proven safe for human health. The court required the FDA to "evaluate the safety risks" of medically important antibiotics and "either make the finding that the drugs are not shown to be safe or provide a reasoned explanation as to why the Agency is refusing to make such a finding." In March, the court also required FDA to withdraw approvals for the non-therapeutic use of penicillin and tetracyclines in animal feed unless drug manufacturers prove that such uses are safe. These court decisions now pave the way for the reasoned, scientific decisions about antibiotic use in food animals that should have taken place years ago. While the FDA has issued draft guidance to industry regarding 'judicious use' of antibiotics in food animals, the agency has not shown how this step will guarantee meaningful reductions in drug use; the guidance cannot be helpful without substantial improvements.

To protect the effectiveness of these life-saving medicines, we ask that you encourage FDA to build upon these court opinions and take bolder steps to safeguard the American public, and oppose any Congressional efforts that will limit or undermine the FDA's ability to address this important public health issue.

For additional information please contact Daniel Rosenberg, Senior Attorney, Health and Environment Program, NRDC at (202)-289-6868 or [drosenberg@nrdc.org](mailto:drosenberg@nrdc.org); or Avinash Kar, Attorney, Health and Environment Program, NRDC at (415)-875-6122 or [akar@nrdc.org](mailto:akar@nrdc.org).

Sincerely,

**Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics**  
**American College of Preventive Medicine**  
**American Public Health Association**  
**Association for Politics and the Life Sciences**  
**Center for Food Safety**  
**Center for Science in the Public Interest**  
**Consumers Union**  
**Familyfarmed.org**  
**Food Animal Concerns Trust**  
**Food and Water Watch**  
**Health Care Without Harm**  
**Humane Society of the United States**  
**Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association**  
**Institute for a Sustainable Future**  
**Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**  
**Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future**  
**Keep Antibiotics Working**  
**National Consumers League**  
**National Foundation for Infectious Diseases**  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**  
**STOP Foodborne Illness**  
**The Pew Charitable Trusts**  
**Union of Concerned Scientists**  
**Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility**