

January 16, 2000

Dear FDA Commissioner Jane E. Henney,

I am a citizen who is extremely concerned about how antibiotics are routinely fed to livestock to promote growth, particularly virginiamycin which is being given to conventionally raised poultry. I understand that virginiamycin is a close cousin to Synercid, a new antibiotic considered a "last resort" antibiotic when all others have failed to kill resistant bacteria. We must protect Synercid's potency by keeping poultry farmers from using virginiamycin. This practice has been banned from the European Union as a sensible precaution to ensure the effectiveness of antibiotics for the general population. We must adopt similar, sensible regulations to keep the potential "superbugs" or super bacteria from developing because of prior exposure to antibiotics fed to animals at low doses and our consumption of those animals. The stakes are too high. We are risking the entire population by allowing this practice to continue. When will we join our European neighbors who have placed safety before profits, the people before corporate profits and sensibility before utter carelessness. I would like to know your position on this practice and why ~~your~~ you support or don't support it.

QQP-0485

cc: U.S. Trade Representative  
Charlene Barshefsky

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Diane dos Santos  
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**FIGHTING SUPERBUGS**

For more than 30 years, doctors have used the antibiotic vancomycin when all others have failed. Now vancomycin itself is starting to fail. More than half the strains of *Enterococcus faecium*, a bacterium that causes infections after surgery, are resistant to it.



Memo From MFJ

Enter Synercid, a new antibiotic that was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in September. In about half the cases, Synercid works when other antibiotics—including vancomycin—don't.

But bacteria have already started to become immune to Synercid.

Part of the problem is that a close cousin of Synercid, virginiamycin, has been routinely fed to poultry (to speed growth) for over a decade. That might explain why bacteria are starting to become resistant to Synercid.

Photo: Robin Cahola

To keep that from happening, you can urge the government to:

■ Prohibit livestock producers from routinely adding medically important antibiotics to animal feed to promote growth. Write to: FDA Commissioner Jane E. Henney, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857 (hamric@oc.fda.gov).

■ Not let U.S. trade policy endanger the public's health. The European Union has sensibly banned antibiotics used by humans from animal feed, a decision supported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization. The Clinton Administration, in a misguided effort to protect U.S. meat-packers and drug companies, is protesting that decision. Write to: U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, 600 17th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20508.

*Michael F. Jacobson*  
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The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is the non-profit health-advocacy group that publishes Nutrition Action Healthletter. CSPI mounts educational programs and presses for changes in government and corporate policies.

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