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Jane Henney, M.D., Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane Room 1471
Rockville, MD 20857

RE: Use of antibiotics in agriculture

Dear Dr. Henney,

Evidence continues to mount that the effectiveness of antibiotics is being rapidly depleted by the development of resistance organisms. Overuse of antibiotics in agriculture is a major contributing factor to this serious problem. The Centers for Disease Control considers the agricultural use of antibiotics to be the primary cause of antibiotic resistance in food-borne illness.

Nearly 80 percent of agricultural antibiotics are not used to treat sick animals but merely to promote efficient growth of chickens, cows, and pigs. In light of the developing crisis of resistance, this use of antibiotics is creating a serious health risk in order to increase the profits of livestock producers. This situation is dangerous and unacceptable.

In 1998, the European Union (EU) banned use of all antibiotics used in human medicine for animal growth promotion. Furthermore, they authorized only four antibiotics not used in human medicine for agricultural use without prescription. The United States, by contrast, allows 19 different antibiotics to be used for growth promotion, including at least 7 used in human medicine. The U.S. has threatened to challenge the EU ban as an illegal trade barrier before the World Trade Organization.

Instead of acting on behalf of U.S. pharmaceutical and meat companies by pressuring the EU to rescind their ban, our federal government should take immediate action on behalf of all Americans to follow the EU's sensible and courageous action in banning the use of antibiotics to promote livestock growth. I urge that the FDA fulfill its purpose to protect the health of Americans by moving immediately to ban animal uses of growth-promoting antibiotics.

Sincerely,

Prudence Cunningham
Prudence Cunningham

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This is yet another example of how the meat industry harms our environment and our health. Responsible action is often ignored because it is more profitable to support the livestock producers.

Ms. Prudence Cunningham
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