

April 21, 1999

0766 '99 MAY -6 P1:44

Dr. Stephen Sundlof
FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine
7500 Standish Place
Rockville, MD 20855

Dear Dr. Sundlof:

We support the Food Animals Concerns Trust and all other organizations concerned about this issue...we urge you and your agency to work to ban antibiotics used to promote growth in farm animals.

If we work to keep people from using drugs, why do we allow the use of drugs in animals?

I gave up eating meat 12 years ago, but I am still concerned for the animals and people who continue to have meat in their diet.

Sincerely,

Shirley + Jeff Graves

Shirley and Jeff Graves
57 Bahama Reef
Novato, CA 94949

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FACT ACTS

FOOD ANIMAL CONCERNS TRUST • P.O. BOX 14599 • CHICAGO, IL. 60614 • (773) 525-4952

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ANNUAL REPORT ISSUE

WINTER

FACT Calls for End to Farm Drug Abuse

FACT wants to stop the current practice of drugging farm animals to simply promote their rapid growth. As this newsletter goes to press, FACT is joining with others to petition the FDA to ban the use of growth promoting antibiotics in farm animals. FACT is promoting better care for farm animals instead of a reliance on antibiotics. It is known that when animals are fed a nutritious diet and live in a healthy environment, growth promoters are not needed. Also, when antibiotics that are used in human medicine such as penicillin are used on farms, the environment becomes contaminated with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotic treatment. These antibiotic resistant germs are a serious and growing threat to human health. It is these drugs from human medicine in particular that the petitioners want banned.

In January the Food and Drug Administration's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee (VMAC) met to address antibiotic use with farm animals. It was the first time that a government sponsored public forum had been held on the issue. Government officials, animal drug industry leaders, and consumer group representatives filled the hall and addressed the VMAC panel. FACT's Executive



Director, Richard Wood, is a new VMAC member. He supported steps by the FDA to add strict requirements to all future antibiotic approvals limiting the potential for resistant bacteria to occur. Rich also called for on-farm testing for antibiotic resistance in food animals.

FACT believes that drugs can be abused with farm animals just as they can be with humans. Most of the antibiotics administered to animals on factory farms have nothing to do with treating their illnesses. In the 1950's it was discovered that by feeding low levels of antibiotics to poultry and pigs, their growth was dramatically enhanced. Why antibiotics cause this faster growth is still not understood. Today epidemiologists at the Centers for Disease Control

estimate that 80% of the antibiotics used on farms are used for growth promotion. Among pigs, 93% receive antibiotics in their diets at some time during their "grower/finisher" period.

(Continued on page 3)

Support FACT in seeking to ban growth promoting drugs

Ask the FDA to ban antibiotics used to promote growth in farm animals. Write Dr. Stephen Sundlof, FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine, 7500 Standish Place, Rockville, MD, 20855

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Some of the same antibiotics used for growth promotion such as virginiamycin and tylosin phosphate are also used in treating human illnesses. There is increasing evidence that bacteria in animals become resistant to antibiotics they are given and that these bacteria infect humans through the meat, milk and eggs we eat. There is no treatment for people infected with antibiotic resistant bacteria. Prolonged illness and even death occur.

Late last year the European Union voted to ban four growth-promoting antibiotics, which are also used to treat human illness. Sweden had previously banned all antibiotics in animal feed and Denmark has a partial ban. As expected, the animal drug industry reacted with a vengeance. Pfizer, a U.S. pharmaceutical and animal drug giant, sued the Danish government for its ban on virginiamycin. At the VMAC meeting as well, the response from the animal drug industry was harsh.