

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Re: The Serious Public Health Threat of Antimicrobial Resistance

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We, the undersigned health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups, ask for your leadership in the global effort to control and prevent the growing public health crisis of antibiotic resistance.

Without sustained and increasing action to address this public health crisis, antibiotic resistance will reverse the medical advances of the last century, returning us to a time when bacterial infections routinely killed even healthy people. Until recently, there were multiple treatment options for most bacterial infections, but this is no longer the case. Now, often, only one antibiotic works. In some cases, as with a woman who died in Nevada last September, there are no effective treatments available at all.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conservatively estimates that resistant pathogens annually cause over two million infections and 23,000 deaths with a cost to society of up to \$70 billion. The use of antibiotics in both human medicine and animal agriculture is a major factor in the spread of resistance. More than 70% of medically important antibiotics are sold for use in animal agriculture, and bacteria from food and animals cause at least 20% of the serious resistant infections identified by the CDC.

Antibiotic resistance also threatens animal health and the productivity of U.S. animal agriculture. Addressing resistance requires addressing antibiotic use on farms through a One Health approach, which considers the connection between animal, human, and environmental health. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) must act to address the antibiotic resistance crisis. We ask for your critical leadership on the following essential steps:

- Strengthening surveillance for resistance through the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System, a collaborative program of the USDA, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), CDC, state and local public health departments, and universities;
- Working with the FDA and food producers to create an active system to monitor and report antibiotic use in animal agriculture through programs of the Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service, Economic Research Service, and National Agricultural Statistics Service;

- Supporting both intramural research by the Agricultural Research Service and extramural research through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of management practices and alternatives to antibiotic use to reduce resistance on farms and in food;
- Building on the existing efforts under the National Action Plan and the USDA Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan; and
- Increasing collaboration with other federal departments and agencies (e.g., Health and Human Services, Department of Defense, and the Environmental Protection Agency) in addressing the threat of antibiotic resistance.

Some livestock, dairy, and poultry farmers – as well as some processors and retailers - are already taking significant steps to address the threat of antibiotic resistance in response to concerns for animal and human health. Given consumer demand, these actions can also be beneficial to the farmer's bottom line.

USDA should support and help accelerate these efforts. We are very interested in hearing about the steps you intend to take and whether you can lend your support to our requested actions.

We eagerly await your reply, and urge your critical leadership on this imminent and devastating threat to human health.

Sincerely,



Steven Roach
Food Safety Program Director, Food Animal Concerns Trust
3525 W. Peterson Ave., Ste. 213, Chicago IL 60659
Email: sroach@foodanimaconcerns.org
Phone: 773-525-4952

On Behalf of:

Keep Antibiotics Working
Food Animal Concerns Trust
ALLEGRA Learning Solutions
Antibiotic Resistance Action Center, Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George
Washington University
As You Sow
Center for Food Safety
Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention

Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Food and Justice Coalition
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers Union
Food Action
Food and Water Watch
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Health Care Without Harm
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Michigan Antibiotic Resistance Reduction (MARR) Coalition
Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Center for Health Research
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
Northwest Environmental Advocates
Ohio Osteopathic Association
Pediatric Infectious Disease Society
Prevention Institute
San Francisco Marin Medical Society
School Food Focus
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists
The Cornucopia Institute
The Humane Society of the United States
U.S. PIRG