

## PROPOSED ANTIBIOTIC BAN

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is accepting comments regarding a proposal to limit the use of certain antibiotics in livestock production. One of the areas of responsibility of the FDA, an agency within the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, is for the regulation of medicated animal feeds and most animal health products. The FDA approves products and the manufacturing process, sets the tolerances or allowable levels of the product in edible tissue, and approves how drugs are to be administered to animals. Before the FDA approves a drug, the drug sponsor has to show that the drug is safe and effective for its intended use.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) submitted comments last week regarding the proposed ban. AFBF reminded FDA that agricultural producers are vitally concerned about the safety of the food products they produce. All segments of the food production chain have a vested interest in protecting both public and animal health. In their submitted comments, AFBF argued there are still no peer-reviewed scientific studies to support the theory that judicious use of antibiotics in livestock increases antibiotic resistance in people. Additionally, there is no scientific data to indicate limiting antibiotic use in livestock decreases human health problems with antibiotic resistance. One would expect AFBF to speak out in support of current agricultural practices.

It is interesting to note however, that the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), a non-agricultural group, also submitted comments on the proposed ban. According to their own website, the Competitive Enterprise Institute is a non-profit public policy organization dedicated to advancing the principles of limited government, free enterprise, and individual liberty. Their mission is to promote both freedom and fairness by making good policy good politics. They attempt to make the uncompromising case for economic freedom because they believe it is essential for entrepreneurship, innovation, and prosperity to flourish.

In its comments the CEI warned that the proposal to limit the use of certain antibiotics in livestock could unintentionally increase the threat of foodborne illness in the United States. CEI warned that “uses of these drugs for growth promotion reduces pathogen loads in animal-derived foods and have a positive effect on human safety, so such restrictions could do more harm than good.”

Readers will be pleased to know that every effort is being made by the agricultural industry to implement proper production practices, thus maintaining our reputation of producing agricultural products that are safe and nutritious. Agricultural producers are routinely trained regarding the implementation of approved production practices to insure that livestock, dairy and poultry are free from chemical and physical hazards and that the animals are raised in a caring manner with regard to their well-being.

Just last week, Utah dairy producers participated in the voluntary Dairy Animal Care and Quality Assurance (DACQA) Certification program. The purpose of this program was “to enhance and demonstrate quality animal care practices, which assures food safety, quality and value as well as enhance consumer confidence in the milk and beef products that are harvested from cattle on America’s dairy farms.”

Through training, certification, self-evaluation and third party verification, this program not only demonstrates the producers commitment to quality animal care and marketing decisions, it also provides the tools that help dairy producers manage their herds in a way that contributes to the farm's economic success.

The Extension Office is also a training resource for Pork Producers who need to be certified in the Pork Quality Assurance Plus (PQA Plus) Program. In most cases, PQA Plus certification is a requirement before pork producers can market their product with most pork processors. The PQA Plus Program methodically covers 10 specific production practices, including the responsible use of antibiotics.

Food safety is not optional. Consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of animal products is essential in a competitive market. Without that confidence, the economic well-being of agriculturalists would be at risk.