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KAW Coalition Applauds New CDC Campaign To Reduce Medical Overuse Of Antibiotics *ANTIBIOTIC OVERUSE IN AGRICULTURE ALSO REQUIRES ACTION*

Washington, DC – The Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) coalition applauded a new media campaign against antibiotic overuse launched today by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). But KAW also urged policymakers to take steps to curtail the massive feeding of antibiotics to livestock and poultry that aren't even sick. Use of antibiotics as animal feed additives exceeds an estimated 24 million pounds annually, eight times the amount prescribed by doctors to treat human disease. Antibiotics are typically fed to chickens, beef cattle and pigs to make them grow faster, and to compensate for overcrowded, stressful and unsanitary conditions on industrial-scale farms.

“As the National Academy of Sciences recently pointed out, the medical community cannot stem the onslaught of antibiotic resistant bacteria by itself,” said Margaret Mellon, Ph.D., of the Union of Concerned Scientists. “The overuse of antibiotics in both human healthcare and animal agriculture threatens public health.”

The CDC regards antibiotic resistance as one of the world's most pressing public health problems. A recent report by the National Academy of Sciences, *Microbial Threat to Health*, warned of the growing menace of antibiotic resistance from both medical and agricultural overuse of these drugs. The report observed: “Clearly, a decrease in antimicrobial use in human medicine alone will have little effect on the current situation. Substantial efforts must be made to decrease inappropriate overuse in animals and agriculture as well.”

“Since the livestock and poultry industries won't stop their routine feeding of medically important antibiotics to beef cattle, swine, turkeys and chickens, Congress should act quickly to adopt legislation that will require it,” Mellon said.

Such legislation was introduced on July 25 by Sens. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and by Reps. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD). “The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act” (S.1460/H.R.2932) phases out, over two years, the routine feeding to food animals of eight classes of medically important antibiotics, but allows the continued use of antibiotics to treat sick animals and to prevent the spread of disease, when indicated.

The CDC's new campaign comes on the heels of other noteworthy developments on agricultural antibiotics. A letter from former FDA Commissioner Donald Kennedy and 13 other prominent physicians and scientists urging an end to agricultural overuse of antibiotics was published last week in several newspapers around the country. Last month, the World Health Organization released a report showing that farmers in Denmark – the world's largest pork exporter – reduced antibiotic use by 50 percent following a complete ban on antibiotic growth promoters. In June, McDonald's, the world's largest fast food chain, adopted a new policy designed to reduce its meat suppliers' use of medically important antibiotics as growth promoters.

The Keep Antibiotics Working campaign (www.KeepAntibioticsWorking.com) is a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups with more than nine million members dedicated to eliminating a major cause of antibiotic resistance-the inappropriate use of antibiotics in farm animals.

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