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**DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF FDA INACTION: 34-YEAR FAILURE  
TO BAN ANTIBIOTICS IN ANIMAL FEEDS CATCHES UP WITH  
RESISTANCE TO *SALMONELLA* OUTBREAK**

***FDA Failed to Prohibit Ampicillin and Tetracycline from Animal Feeds; Salmonella  
Resistant to Both Drugs***

***Resistant strain of Salmonella Heidelberg spread through ground turkey  
has killed one, caused 78 illnesses***

Washington, D.C. – The *Salmonella* involved in the outbreak and recall of Cargill turkey meat is resistant to ampicillin and tetracycline, two antibiotics the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has failed to protect for 34 years, Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) reported today. In 1977, the FDA proposed banning the addition of ampicillin and tetracycline, or closely related drugs, to animal feeds because using them would lead to resistant infections in people. However, FDA failed to go through with its 1977 proposal. Today, these antibiotics can still be used in animal feed for growth promotion and other purposes besides disease treatment. The outbreak of *Salmonella* Heidelberg spread through ground turkey – and the subsequent death and 78 illnesses – reflects a growing public health crisis in which the overuse in animal agriculture of antibiotics critical to human medicine has weakened their effectiveness.

“The 79 victims of the current outbreak of resistant *Salmonella* must be added to hundreds of thousands of other victims who previously contracted resistant illness from food as a result of FDA's failure to act,” said Steven Roach, Public Health Program Director at Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT), and a member of KAW. “The FDA has had many opportunities to protect Americans from increasingly dangerous bacteria that contaminate our food supply. As we have seen over the last few weeks, there are real and tragic consequences to the FDA’s failure to target the overuse in animal agriculture of antibiotics critical to human medicine.”

The World Health Organization considers ampicillin and tetracycline critical for human medicine. Yet, drugs related to ampicillin and tetracycline are approved without a prescription for use in turkey feed for growth promotion and disease control. In May of this year, consumer groups filed a law suit asking FDA to finally withdraw these antibiotics for use in feed.

In the wake of the outbreak of *Salmonella* Heidelberg, Keep Antibiotics Working is urging the FDA and Congress to take action against the overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture, a main reason that Americans suffer from resistant superbug infections coming from food.

According to data released by the FDA in December 2010, 80 percent of antibiotic drugs in the United States were sold for use in food animals – most of them not to treat animal illness, but to promote slightly faster growth and to compensate for crowded, stressful, and unhygienic conditions at industrial-scale livestock and poultry facilities. Such use of antibiotics is referred to as “non-therapeutic” use, meaning they are not used for the treatment of illness. Many of the antibiotics fed to animals are the same as those we depend on for human medicine. They are given in low doses virtually every day of the animal’s life – a recipe for developing “super bugs” – without so much as a veterinarian’s prescription.

Currently, the FDA process for removing animal drugs from the market when they contribute to human antibiotic resistance is far too slow to keep pace with the rapid rate at which resistance is emerging. KAW supports the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), bipartisan legislation that would address this inaction and reduce antibiotic resistance by phasing out the use of medically important antibiotics in food animals that are not sick.

Specifically, the bill would prohibit giving antibiotics to food animals for reasons other than disease treatment if the same or related drugs are also used in human medicine. If a drug company can show that their product is not creating a human health problem due to resistance, it will be exempt from the prohibition.

“This outbreak offers stark casualties from our collective failure to keep antibiotics out of animal feed,” Roach added. “The *Salmonella* resistance to ampicillin and tetracycline that we’ve seen these past weeks should serve as a cautionary tale for the FDA and Congress as we respond to future outbreaks.”

*Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) is a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane, and other advocacy groups with more than 11 million supporters.*

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