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**FDA Puts Off Public Health Protections to Accommodate Farm Industry**  
*Agency Reverses Ban on Extralabel use of Cephalosporins Before  
It Goes Into Effect*

**Washington, D.C.** – Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW), a coalition of consumer, environmental, science and humane organizations today blasted the FDA for reversing its decision to ban the extralabel use of cephalosporin antimicrobial drugs in veterinary medicine. In July, FDA announced the ban stating that this use presents a risk to public health. Now less than a week before the ban was to go into effect the FDA has withdrawn it. This move comes after the Agency received over 300 comments from the animal agriculture industry and production veterinarians.

The reversal simply ignores the evidence on which FDA's initial decision was based as well as other studies submitted to the Agency supporting the ban. FDA determined there was a public health risk in part because there had been a rapid rise in resistance to cephalosporin drugs in the foodborne pathogen *Salmonella* in both humans and farm animals. Along with many other important infections, cephalosporins are the treatment of choice for serious *Salmonella* infections in humans which cause 1,300,000 U.S. illnesses each year. Rising resistance is a problem because it leads to more and more severe illness including more hospitalizations and more death.

“The FDA continues to ignore the mounting body of evidence about the dangerous misuse of human antibiotics in animal production, and instead defers to the agribusiness interests by putting off this ban,” said Margaret Mellon, senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists. “FDA got it right the first time, the extralabel use of cephalosporins in food animal medicine presents a clear risk to human health and should be restricted.”

FDA must have as its priority protecting public health. FDA should work with veterinarians to identify alternatives to extralabel cephalosporin use instead of continuing to allow an entrenched practice they know puts the public at risk.

This is just one area where the FDA has shown itself unwilling to challenge agribusiness on antimicrobial use. In 2004, the FDA determined that using penicillin antibiotics for growth promotion in food animals was inappropriate because of the risk of resistance. Despite this they have taken no steps to restrict this use.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress that would require the FDA to take this matter seriously. The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA) would help combat the antibiotic resistance crisis America is currently facing. The bill would require the FDA to review prior approvals for antibiotics such as penicillin and tetracycline to determine whether they can be safely used as animal feed additives.

PAMTA is widely supported by the public health, scientific and medical communities. The American Medical Association, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the American Academy of Pediatrics are among the more than 350 health, agriculture and other groups nationwide that have endorsed this legislation.

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