

STEERING COMMITTEE

Center for Science in the
Public Interest

Environmental Defense

Food Animal Concerns
Trust

Global Resource Action
Center for the Environment

Humane Society of the
United States

Institute for Agriculture
and Trade Policy

National Catholic Rural Life
Conference

Natural Resources Defense
Council

Physicians for Social
Responsibility

Safe Tables Our Priority
(S.T.O.P.)

Sierra Club

Union of Concerned
Scientists

Waterkeeper Alliance

For Immediate Release:
September 27, 2006

Contact: Dan Klotz, 917-438-4613-w,
347-307-2866-c, dklotz@mrssny.com

US FDA Advisory Committee Finds Using Human Antibiotic in Cattle Could Create Antibiotic Resistance and Threaten Human Health

Washington, DC - A key advisory committee of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this week rejected the claim of the manufacturer Intervet, that its new cattle antibiotic cefquinome could be considered safe for human health. Cefquinome, proposed for use against respiratory disease in cattle, is a 4th generation cephalosporin, a class which includes the important human drug cefepime. Growing scientific evidence shows that use of similar antibiotics in both human medicine and food animal production can erode the effectiveness of drugs vital for use in human medicine

The surprise decision by the FDA's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee (VMAC) came at the end of a hearing on Monday, at which the American Medical Association, Infectious Disease Society of America, Keep Antibiotics Working coalition, and Union of Concerned Scientists, testified that use of cefepime in cattle could increase cephalosporin-resistant *E. coli* and *Salmonella* bacteria, two major causes of food poisoning (see AMA, IDSA, KAW and UCS testimony at www.keepantibioticsworking.com).

“VMAC’s decision represents an important victory for public health,” said Richard Wood, Keep Antibiotics Working Steering Committee Chair and Executive Director of Food Animal Concerns Trust. “The 4th generation cephalosporins are a vital part of the human drug arsenal. We should not put them at risk by widespread use in cattle.”

The recommendations of the VMAC are not binding but it is rare for committee advice to be ignored. If the FDA accepts the committee’s finding that the safety of cefquinome has not been shown, then the drug will not be approved.

In Europe, where cefquinome has already been approved and used under the brand name Cobactan, resistance to this and other cephalosporins has emerged among *E. coli* and *Salmonella* bacteria isolated from livestock. In the U.S, where 4th generation cephalosporins have not been approved for use in animal agriculture, resistance to these drugs is uncommon.

“Several of the committee members raised concerns about the possible widespread use of the drug not only in cattle but in other species” said Wood. “Without basic safeguards in place—controls on extra-label use, monitoring of quantities of drugs used, and adequate support for monitoring the development of resistance—you can’t even consider using critically important human drugs in food animals. It will never be safe.”

###