



LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
28TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

April 5, 2012

Dr. Margaret Hamburg  
Commissioner  
Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

Dear Commissioner Hamburg:

It has come to my attention that a recent scientific study strongly implicates the illegal use of banned antibiotics on poultry factory farms.<sup>1</sup> The study reported that feather meal – a byproduct made of feathers from slaughtered chickens sent to our grocery store shelves – routinely contains a banned class of antibiotics called fluoroquinolones. These antibiotics are illegal in poultry production because they lead to antibiotic-resistant “superbugs” that can infect humans.

Given that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned the use of fluoroquinolones – a class of antibiotics that includes Cipro – back in 2005, this drug should not be detectable in feather meal. On behalf of families and consumers across the country, I request a timely response from FDA on how the agency plans to investigate this matter and ensure proper oversight of antibiotics used to feed healthy animals. The American public deserves to know what oversight is currently in place, how many personnel are assigned to this task, how additional investigations will be carried out given the results of this study, what measures will be taken to determine how fluoroquinolones are entering the poultry production system, and how the FDA plans to improve enforcement measures.

Today, antibiotic-resistant infections kill more Americans than AIDS. This is simply unacceptable. The FDA is tasked with protecting the health and well-being of the American people. Despite this mandate, the FDA has not acted in the best interest of public health by continuing to postpone, prolong, and de-prioritize important measures that are necessary to protect the American people. For decades, FDA has dragged its feet, allowing the food-animal industry to regulate itself. It has taken a federal court ruling to require the agency to address the growing human health threat from misuse of antibiotics in animal feed. Just last month, Judge Katz ruled that FDA must act to withdraw approval for penicillin and tetracycline, two antibiotics important for human health, from livestock feed.<sup>2</sup> Clearly more work is needed.

<sup>1</sup> Love, D.C.; Halden, R.U.; Davis, M.F.; Nachman, K.E. Feather meal: A Previously Unrecognized Route for Reentry into the Food Supply of Multiple Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs). *Environ. Sci. Technol.* **2012**, *46* (7), 3795-3802.

<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., et al. v. United States Food and Drug Administration, et al., United States District Court, Southern District of New York, case no. 1:11-cv-03562-THK (order dated 03/22/12).

For this reason, I have spent years advocating for better stewardship of our precious antibiotic drugs. As the author of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), I am working to phase out the needless use of antibiotics fed to healthy animals in order to preserve the effectiveness of these drugs for human use. Despite the inadequacy of FDA's current response to this growing emergency, I expect the agency to enforce the ban on fluoroquinolones it already has in place. Due to the sensitive nature of this public health and safety concern, I request a response within 30 days.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS