

Inspections uncovered the presence of toxic, banned substance chloramphenicol

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), the only microbiologist in Congress and the leading voice for ending the routine use of antibiotics in food animals, expressed concern over the recent discovery of chloramphenicol residues in pork exported to Taiwan. Chloramphenicol is an antibiotic approved for use in humans, cats and dogs, but banned for use in food animals because residues can be toxic to humans. Long term exposure has been linked to leukemia and it is also associated with potentially fatal forms of anemia. Because of its toxicity, the drug is only prescribed for humans when other drugs have been proven ineffective. Slaughter has been working to protect seven classes of antibiotics for human health through H.R. 965, The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), which is designed to end the routine use of antibiotics on healthy animals and curb the growing threat of superbugs.

"The presence of this banned substance in U.S. exports is, quite frankly, alarming," said Slaughter. "Not only does this compound pose a significant risk to human health, which should be reason enough to follow the law banning its use, but its presence in our exports represents a real danger to our existing trade relationships. If we are unable to ensure that dangerous substances are not present in products we export, I am certain that other exporters will be more than happy to step in. This violation of law is even more evidence that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's oversight is lacking, and that their reliance on "voluntary guidance" regarding other antibiotics used by the food animal industry is insufficient. I hope this lights a fire under the FDA to step up to their responsibility to protect American consumers and our economy. "

The banned compound was found during inspections of pork balls and pork burger imported from the U.S. by Taiwan. The inspections also uncovered the presence of ractopamine, a livestock feed additive also banned in pork imported by Taiwan.

Slaughter has been a leading advocate in calling for greater monitoring and oversight by the Food and Drug Administration. She has written multiple letters to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) criticizing the agency for its lack of attention to the use of antibiotics in farm animals. In April of 2012, she again wrote the FDA after a study found that a byproduct of chickens called "feather meal" contained fluoroquinolones, a banned class of antibiotics that is illegal in poultry production because its misuse leads to antibiotic-resistant "superbugs" that can infect humans.

Earlier this year, Slaughter [sent letters to over 60 fast food companies, producers, processors, and grocery store chains](#) asking them to disclose their policies on antibiotic use in meat and poultry production. Very simply, consumers have a right to know what is in their food. The U.S. is facing a growing public health crisis in the form of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and information about how companies may or may not be contributing to the problem should be available to consumers.