

"The American people should be outraged by such failure to take action."

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and the only microbiologist in Congress, today sent a letter to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sharply criticizing the agency's inaction to combat the looming public health threat of antibiotic resistance in America and pointed out the growing list of countries, including China, that are already taking action.

The letter was drafted in response to a lack of movement by the FDA on three fronts regarding antibiotic use in agriculture, including the finalization of industry guidelines, a lack of transparency in reporting data collected regarding antibiotic use, and inadequate rationale for the rejection of two citizens petitions calling for limits on the nontherapeutic use of medically important antimicrobials in food animals.

"The FDA has not acted in the best interest of public health, and continues to postpone, prolong, and de-prioritize important measures that are necessary to protect the American people. The agency has a public mandate to protect public health – not to cater to the special interests of the agriculture industry," said Slaughter. She went on to write, "Every year, two million Americans acquire bacterial infections during their hospital stay, and nearly 100,000 die from them. Seventy percent of these infections are resistant to the drugs commonly used to treat them. In a review study published last month, Tufts University School of Medicine researchers stated that, 'There is no doubt that human misuse and overuse of antibiotics are large contributors to resistance, particularly in relation to bacteria associated with human infection.' Despite clear warning signs, the U.S. has fallen behind as other countries, including Denmark, Germany, South Korea, and now China have implemented or announced bans on the use of antibiotics as growth promoters in food-animal production. Rather than follow a proactive "precautionary principle," the U.S. continues to falter when it comes to regulation of antibiotic use, risking widespread and irreparable harm to the American people."

The letter comes a full three months after 136 people were infected by an antibiotic-resistant strain of Salmonella in contaminated ground turkey. The FDA has yet to address the issue.

Due to the increasing prevalence of multidrug resistant bacterial infections across Europe, the EU recently began mobilizing against nontherapeutic use of antibiotics in farm animals, issuing

a 5-year strategy to combat antibiotic resistance. Meanwhile, a GAO study, requested by Slaughter and released by her office in September, found that U.S. federal agencies responsible for addressing the overuse of antibiotics in food animal production "lack crucial details" in data to do their job.

At the time Slaughter said, "By all means, if an animal is sick, it should be treated with antibiotics. But to fatten up healthy animals through the daily dosing of antibiotics – drugs that should be preserved to treat human illnesses – is malpractice and it's contributing to an increase in deadly antibiotic resistant bacteria. And as other nations move towards more antibiotic-free meat, we really can't expect that they will continue to purchase US meat grown with antibiotics."

Slaughter is a long-time leader in food safety. She is the author of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), legislation that would ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human disease. More information on Slaughter's efforts to fight the looming public health crisis of antibiotic resistance is available [here](#).

For a copy of the letter to the FDA, please [click here](#) .