

Leaders from Chipotle, Applegate Farms and Niman Ranch Say Antibiotic-Free Meat is Good Business

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WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and the only microbiologist in Congress, today hosted a briefing where farmers and successful businesses extolled the benefits of tapping into the growing domestic and international demand for antibiotic-free meat.

She was joined by an impressive panel made up of Chipotle CEO Steve Ells, Chairman of one of the nation's fastest growing restaurant companies, along with Stephen McDonnell, CEO of award-winning Applegate Farms, and Paul Willis, President of Niman Ranch, a network of over 676 independent sustainable farms.

At the briefing, titled "Keeping Antibiotics Working: Company successes in marketing 'antibiotic-free' meat and poultry," leaders from across the industry highlighted company successes with antibiotic-free products and their benefits to human health. The group also urged congressional action to preserve antibiotics for the treatment of human diseases.

"I'm delighted that these leaders took time out of their busy days to come and help policymakers understand the benefits that come from raising and serving antibiotic-free meat. They show us what good business looks like and I greatly appreciate what they do each day," said Slaughter.

"Countries like South Korea and Germany are implementing bans on the use of antibiotics as growth promoters in healthy food-animals," continued Slaughter. "Even China has been progressing toward banning the use of antibiotics in healthy food animals. Meanwhile the US government has done nothing and that's a real shame. I firmly believe that without federal

action, this will become a trade issue when the American farmer will no longer be able to compete on a level playing field as other nations will refuse to import meat full of antibiotics."

Featured was the story of Russ Kremer, Co-founder and President of Ozark Mountain Pork Cooperative who changed his business practices to raising exclusively antibiotic-free meat after being gored by boar and suffering from a infection resistant to antibiotics.

Russ Kremer, Co-founder and President of Ozark Mountain Pork Cooperative, told his story about being gored by a boar and getting an antibiotic-resistant infection while operating his family farm, which had been convinced by industry to begin using antibiotics as growth promoters in their animal feed. As his health deteriorated and none of the antibiotics doctors were using were working, Kremer realized he had contracted the same infection as the pigs he was raising, which had been shown to be resistant to seven out of eight antibiotics commonly used to treat infections in humans. The incident shed light on the dangers associated with the regular dosing of antibiotics to healthy animals.

"Since 1989, after all those years, my hogs have been drug free," said Kremer. "I did it, not because I knew about Whole Foods or Chipotle or Niman Ranch – I didn't even know what natural organic meant. I did it because I was so remorseful that I had been doing something wrong to society, that I quit. It was the right thing to do. It was extremely sustainable for me, I didn't have to pay those \$16,000 a year drug bills. And it's become one of the most satisfying lifestyles you can imagine, now dealing with healthy happy pigs."

Slaughter is the author of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), legislation to ensure we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human disease. [For more on PAMTA and her work to protect public health, click here.](#)