

March 17, 2009 - Slaughter Introduces Bill to Curb Excessive Use of Antibiotics in Food Supply

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. Rep. Slaughter
Introduces Bill to Curb Excessive Use of Antibiotics in Nation's Food Supply

Legislation Would Limit Antibiotic Use in Livestock Feed,

Help to Combat Growth of Treatment-Resistant Bacteria

Washington, DC - Congresswoman

Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee and a microbiologist with a Masters degree in Public Health, today introduced the "Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act" (PAMTA) in the House of Representatives. This critical legislation is designed to ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human diseases.

"There is little doubt that antibiotic-resistant diseases are a growing public health menace," said Rep. Slaughter. "From peanut butter to spinach to hot dogs, we all want to make sure the food we feed our families is safe. My legislation will limit the use of antibiotics on our livestock to ensure that we are not inadvertently creating antibiotic-resistant diseases that we can't fight with modern medicine."

Antibiotics are an indispensable part of modern medicine, protecting all of us from deadly infections. Unfortunately, over the past several years, the widespread practice of using antibiotics to promote livestock growth and compensate for unsanitary, crowded conditions has led to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria and other germs, rendering many of our most powerful drugs ineffective.

According to estimates by the Union of Concerned Scientists, 50 million pounds of antibiotics - nearly 70 percent of all antibiotics sold in the U.S. - have been used in food animals for purposes other than treating disease since PAMTA was last introduced two years ago.

"The practice of over-using antibiotics in animal feed is certainly contributing to the rise of antibiotic-resistant

bacteria," Rep. Slaughter added. "This legislation will play a critical role in protecting the integrity of our antibiotics and the health of all Americans."

Background

The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act would:

- Phase out the non-therapeutic use in livestock of medically important antibiotics;
- Require this same tough standard of new applications for approval of animal antibiotics;
- Does not restrict use of antibiotics to treat sick animals or to treat pets and other animals not used for food.

Over 300 organizations representing health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other interests including the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, have supported enactment of legislation to phase out non-therapeutic use medically important antibiotics in farm animals.

Two million Americans acquire bacterial infections during their hospital stay every year, and 70 percent of their infections will be resistant to the drugs commonly used to treat them. These impacts on human health can result in both higher frequency and longer duration of hospitalizations, raising the cost of healthcare. Estimates of the extra costs to the U.S. healthcare system due to antibiotic-resistant bacteria range from 4-5 billion dollars per year.

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