

February 9, 2007 - Slaughter Introduces Bill to Curb Excessive Use of Antibiotics

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slaughter Introduces Bill to Curb Excessive Use of Antibiotics
New Law Will Limit Antibiotic Use in Livestock Feed,
Help to Combat Growth of Treatment-Resistant Bacteria

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, yesterday introduced the "Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act" in the House of Representatives. This vitally important bill, designed to ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human diseases, will be introduced in the Senate by Senators Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) on Monday.

"When we go to the grocery store, we should expect that the food we buy will not inadvertently expose our families to dangerous strains of resistant bacteria. However, the practice of over-using antibiotics in raising livestock - even when animals are not sick - is one of the leading contributors to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. As a result, our risk of exposure to increasingly stronger bacteria is becoming a frightening reality," said Rep Slaughter. "It is imperative that Congress enact this critical piece of legislation to protect the integrity of our antibiotics and the future health of our families."

During World War II, the newly developed "wonder drug" penicillin revolutionized the care for our soldiers wounded in battle. Since then, antibiotics have become indispensable in modern medicine, protecting all of us from deadly infections. Unfortunately, over the past several years, the widespread practice of using antibiotics to promote growth and fatten healthy livestock has led to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria and other germs, rendering many of our most powerful drugs ineffective.

It is estimated that 70% of all the antibiotics used in the U.S. are used as feed additives for chicken, hogs, and beef cattle. This indiscriminate use speeds the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria on farms and can result in potential outbreaks of food-borne illnesses for which treatment options would be limited.

Background

The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act

- Phases out the non-therapeutic use in livestock of medically important antibiotics, unless their manufacturers can show that they pose no danger to the public health;
- Requires this same tough standard of new applications for approval of animal antibiotics;
- Provides for Federal payments to farmers to defray their costs in switching to antibiotic-free husbandry practices, with a preference given to family farms; (Senate Only)
- Authorizes grants for research and demonstration programs on means to reduce the use of antibiotics in the raising of livestock; (Senate Only)
- Requires manufacturers to report:
 - on the amounts of antibiotics they supply for animal use
 - on the animals to which those drugs are given
 - on the uses for which those drugs are supplied
- Does not restrict use of antibiotics to treat sick animals or to treat pets and other animals not used for food.

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