

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Thomas E. Price, MD

Secretary

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20201

Re: The Serious Public Health Threat of Antimicrobial Resistance

Dear Secretary Price,

We, the undersigned health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups, ask for your leadership in the global effort to control and prevent the growing public health crisis of antimicrobial resistance.

Without sustained and increasing action to address this public health crisis, antibiotic resistance will reverse the medical advances of the last century, returning us to a time when bacterial infections routinely killed even healthy people. Until recently, there were multiple treatment options for most bacterial infections, but this is no longer the case. Now, often, only one antibiotic works. In some cases, as with a woman who died in Nevada last September, there are no effective treatments available at all.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conservatively estimates that resistant pathogens annually cause over two million infections and 23,000 deaths with a cost to society of up to \$70 billion. The use of antibiotics in both human medicine and animal agriculture is a major factor in the spread of resistance. More than 70% of medically important antibiotics are sold for use in animal agriculture, and bacteria from food and animals cause at least 20% of the serious resistant infections identified by the CDC. Controlling antibiotic resistance requires a multi-sectoral approach that includes both human medicine and animal agriculture.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) plays a critical role in addressing this crisis and we ask for your leadership on the following essential actions:

- Setting targets for reductions in antibiotic overuse in both human medicine and animal agriculture;
- Strengthening surveillance for resistance including the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System, a program led by the Food and Drug Administration in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the CDC;
- Strengthening monitoring of antibiotic use in both human medicine and animal agriculture, including creating, with the USDA, an active system for collecting and sharing data about on-farm antibiotic use;

- Improving antimicrobial stewardship in both sectors, including addressing the overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture for routine disease prevention;
- Supporting the development of new antibiotics, alternatives to antibiotics, and diagnostics both in human and animal medicine; and
- Building on the existing efforts under the National Action Plan, including the continued support for the Presidential Advisory Committee on Combatting Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria.

As the threat of antibiotic resistance has grown, medical providers, food industry leaders, and government agencies have taken important steps to address the threat of antibiotic resistance in response to concerns for animal and human health, and demand from consumers.

HHS should support and help accelerate these efforts. We are very interested in hearing about the steps you intend to take and whether you can lend your support to our requested actions.

We eagerly await your reply, and urge your critical leadership on this imminent and devastating threat to human health.

Sincerely,



Steven Roach

Food Safety Program Director, Food Animal Concerns Trust

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Phone: 773-525-4952

On Behalf of:

Keep Antibiotics Working

Food Animal Concerns Trust

ALLEGRA Learning Solutions

Antibiotic Resistance Action Center, Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George

Washington University

As You Sow

Center for Food Safety

Center for Foodborne Illness Research & Prevention

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Community Food and Justice Coalition

Consumer Federation of America

Consumers Union

Food Action

Food and Water Watch
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Health Care Without Harm
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Michigan Antibiotic Resistance Reduction (MARR) Coalition
Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Center for Health Research
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
Northwest Environmental Advocates
Ohio Osteopathic Association
Pediatric Infectious Disease Society
Prevention Institute
San Francisco Marin Medical Society
School Food Focus
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacist
The Cornucopia Institute
The Humane Society of the United States
U.S. PIRG

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Re: The Serious Public Health Threat of Antimicrobial Resistance

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We, the undersigned health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups, ask for your leadership in the global effort to control and prevent the growing public health crisis of antibiotic resistance.

Without sustained and increasing action to address this public health crisis, antibiotic resistance will reverse the medical advances of the last century, returning us to a time when bacterial infections routinely killed even healthy people. Until recently, there were multiple treatment options for most bacterial infections, but this is no longer the case. Now, often, only one antibiotic works. In some cases, as with a woman who died in Nevada last September, there are no effective treatments available at all.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conservatively estimates that resistant pathogens annually cause over two million infections and 23,000 deaths with a cost to society of up to \$70 billion. The use of antibiotics in both human medicine and animal agriculture is a major factor in the spread of resistance. More than 70% of medically important antibiotics are sold for use in animal agriculture, and bacteria from food and animals cause at least 20% of the serious resistant infections identified by the CDC.

Antibiotic resistance also threatens animal health and the productivity of U.S. animal agriculture. Addressing resistance requires addressing antibiotic use on farms through a One Health approach, which considers the connection between animal, human, and environmental health. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) must act to address the antibiotic resistance crisis. We ask for your critical leadership on the following essential steps:

- Strengthening surveillance for resistance through the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System, a collaborative program of the USDA, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), CDC, state and local public health departments, and universities;
- Working with the FDA and food producers to create an active system to monitor and report antibiotic use in animal agriculture through programs of the Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service, Economic Research Service, and National Agricultural Statistics Service;

- Supporting both intramural research by the Agricultural Research Service and extramural research through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of management practices and alternatives to antibiotic use to reduce resistance on farms and in food;
- Building on the existing efforts under the National Action Plan and the USDA Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan; and
- Increasing collaboration with other federal departments and agencies (e.g., Health and Human Services, Department of Defense, and the Environmental Protection Agency) in addressing the threat of antibiotic resistance.

Some livestock, dairy, and poultry farmers – as well as some processors and retailers - are already taking significant steps to address the threat of antibiotic resistance in response to concerns for animal and human health. Given consumer demand, these actions can also be beneficial to the farmer's bottom line.

USDA should support and help accelerate these efforts. We are very interested in hearing about the steps you intend to take and whether you can lend your support to our requested actions.

We eagerly await your reply, and urge your critical leadership on this imminent and devastating threat to human health.

Sincerely,



Steven Roach
Food Safety Program Director, Food Animal Concerns Trust
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Natural Resources Defense Council
Northwest Environmental Advocates
Ohio Osteopathic Association
Pediatric Infectious Disease Society
Prevention Institute
San Francisco Marin Medical Society
School Food Focus
Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists
The Cornucopia Institute
The Humane Society of the United States
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