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## **NEW REPORT SPELLS OUT THE CRITICAL HEALTH RISK IN ADDING HUMAN ANTIBIOTICS TO ANIMAL FEED IN U.S. FARMS**

***Pew Commission Report Advances Bill Endorsed by AMA and Other Medical Groups;  
Action Needed as Antibiotic-Resistant Diseases Continue to Spread***

Washington, DC – The release of a new report by the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, spelling out the public health risk inherent in factory farming, heightens the urgency surrounding the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA). This bill, which already includes many of the Pew Commission's recommendations, would phase out the use of antibiotics that are important in human medicine as animal feed additives within two years.

Antibiotics are given to animals without a prescription to speed up the animals' growth and to compensate for the crowded, stressful, and often unsanitary conditions on industrial-scale farms. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70% of the antibiotics and related drugs used in the U.S. are added to the feed of chicken, hogs, and beef cattle. This practice spurs the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that is transferred to people through our food, air and water.

"The Pew report documents how the needless squandering of human antibiotics in animal agriculture just pours more fuel on the fire of antibiotic resistant infections plaguing hospital patients and our communities," said David Wallinga, M.D., director of Food and Health at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. "But the steady drumbeat of new science will ring hollow if Congress fails to act. At some point, the public's interest in health and in antibiotics that work has to trump industry interests."

Dr. Wallinga noted that Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) presented a perfect example. Until recently, conventional wisdom had MRSA pegged as an opportunistic infection occurring mainly in hospitals. But a study published last fall in *Veterinary Microbiology* (Khanna et al. 2007) found MRSA was also prevalent in Canadian pigs and pig farmers, clearly pointing to animal agriculture as a source of the deadly bacteria. In recent media coverage of as yet unpublished data, the same scientists found MRSA in nearly one in ten packages of Canadian retail pork. Studies from Europe also indicate that routine antibiotic use contributes to the spread of MRSA on farms. At least one U.S. federal laboratory has begun limited testing of pork, but no federal agency has plans to test livestock for this deadly bacteria.

"If further study connects animal use of antibiotics like penicillin and tetracycline to deadly new infections in schools, gyms and prisons, it just strengthens the case for reduction of that use," said Dr. Margaret Mellon, senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, "and new legislation is the only way to do that in any reasonable time frame."

## **Keep Antibiotics Working**

April 29, 2008

Page 2 of 2

PAMTA is sponsored by Senate Health Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Susan Collins (R-ME), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Jack Reed (D-RI) in the Senate (S. 549) and Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), the only microbiologist in Congress, and 38 other House members in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 962).

The bill would phase out within two years the use as animal feed additives of antibiotics that are also important in human medicine, such as penicillin. The bill also requires the pharmaceutical companies making agricultural antibiotics to submit data on the quantity of drugs they sell, along with information on the claimed purpose and the dosage form of those drugs, to help public health officials track the implementation of the phase-out.

PAMTA has been endorsed by the American Medical Association (AMA), Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Public Health Association (APHA), and more than 350 health, agriculture, and other groups nationwide.

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