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The Campaign to End Antibiotic Overuse

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Two New Studies Show Drug-Resistant Bacteria, Common Food Poisoning Culprits, Often Present in Store-Bought Chicken & Turkey

Consumer Reports Says 90% of Common Food Poisoning Bacteria Tested Showed Antibiotic Resistance, Urges Ban on Non-medical Antibiotic Use in Livestock

Washington, DC – Two new independent studies show that a large proportion of the brand name chicken and turkey products tested are contaminated with disease-causing bacteria, *Campylobacter* or *Salmonella*, that are resistant to one or more antibiotics.

A new study published in the January issue of *Consumer Reports* shows that 49 percent of the chickens CR bought at supermarkets and other stores are contaminated with *Campylobacter* and/or *Salmonella* bacteria. The bacteria are the #1 and #2 causes of food poisoning in the U.S., resulting in 3.3 million illnesses and 650 deaths a year. The study of 484 whole broilers purchased in 25 cities noted that 90 percent of the *Campylobacter* tested and 34 percent of the *Salmonella* tested showed resistance to at least one antibiotic.

A 2nd new study of 200 fresh whole chickens and 200 packages of ground turkey purchased at supermarkets in Des Moines, Iowa and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota showed 95 percent of the chickens tested for *Campylobacter* were contaminated and 45 percent of the ground turkey was contaminated with *Salmonella*. Nearly 62 percent of the *Campylobacter* bacteria tested from whole chickens and over 62 percent of the *Salmonella* bacteria tested from ground turkey were resistant to at least one antibiotic, according to the study authors, the Sierra Club and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. To read the report, see www.northstar.sierraclub.org/antibiotics. Both groups are part of the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign (www.KeepAntibioticsWorking.com).

“These two reports confirm that it’s critical for livestock producers to stop feeding antibiotics routinely to poultry and other food animals that aren’t even sick,” said Navis Bermudez, a scientist for the Sierra Club’s Clean Water Campaign. “More than half of the estimated 24 million pounds of antibiotics fed to hogs, beef cattle and poultry each year to compensate for crowded, stressful conditions on factory farms are identical, or nearly identical, to the ones doctors rely on for treating sick people.”

The CR study concluded: "Congress should ban subtherapeutic uses of medically important [antibiotic] drugs in poultry and other livestock." (Subtherapeutic means use for purposes other than treating disease.) U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) are expected to reintroduce their bills from the 107th Congress to phase out such use of medically important antibiotics in livestock and poultry. Over 30 medical groups, including the AMA, have endorsed that legislation.

“We can’t afford to play Russian roulette with our existing antibiotics because they are rapidly losing effectiveness – and only one new class has been developed in the last 25 years,” said David Wallinga, a

physician at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.