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Advocacy Group Applauds McDonald's for Recognizing Americans 'Deserve a Break Today'

World's Largest Fast Food Chain Begins to Limit Meat Suppliers' Use of Antibiotics; Challenge for Burger King, other fast food chains to step up to the plate

Washington, DC - The Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) campaign today commended McDonald's for recognizing the need to protect public health by limiting the inappropriate use of antibiotics given to farm animals. McDonald's announced a new policy that seeks to reduce the antibiotics used by its meat suppliers.

"The handwriting is on the wall. The world's largest restaurant chain has targeted the inappropriate use of antibiotics in farm animals because it threatens human health," said Margaret Mellon, Ph.D. from the Union of Concerned Scientists. "Now it's time for Burger King and other fast food chains to step up to the plate."

Members of KAW have met with McDonald's, Burger King, and other companies to encourage them to reduce unnecessary uses of antibiotics on farms, and applauded today's announcement.

An estimated 70 percent of all antibiotics used in this country are given to chickens, cows and pigs to make them grow faster, or to compensate for overcrowded, stressful and unsanitary conditions. The inappropriate use of antibiotics in farm animals breeds antibiotic-resistant bacteria that cause hard-to-treat infections in people. The American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and other major health organizations have recommended that the use of antibiotics in agriculture be curbed.

"McDonald's policy only limits antibiotics used for growth promotion and is only mandatory for poultry producers, so it is just a first step," said David Wallinga, MD, Antibiotic Resistance Project Director, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. "The happiest meals will be those produced with even fewer antibiotics."

Senator Kennedy (D-Mass) and Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) will soon introduce legislation to phase out non-therapeutic uses in farm animals of all antibiotics that are similar to human medicines.

"The food industry needs to go farther, but it cannot do it alone. Only the federal government can level the playing field. By passing legislation to stop indiscriminate agricultural use of medically important antibiotics, we can get healthy farm animals off drugs," said Tamar F. Barlam, MD, Director, Project on Antibiotic Resistance at Center for Science in the Public Interest.

KAW is a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups

with over 9 million members dedicated to phasing out the use of antibiotics in livestock and poultry that are medically important to humans.

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