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## **Maine Becomes 1st State to Adopt Meat Purchasing Policy that Addresses Antibiotic Resistance Crisis in Human Medicine**

### ***Policy Gives Preference to Buying Meats from Animals Raised with Less Use of Antibiotics Important in Human Medicine as Feed Additives***

Washington, DC — The Keep Antibiotics Working coalition today applauded Maine's Agriculture Committee for taking historic action to make Maine the first state to adopt a meat purchasing policy to address the antibiotic resistance crisis in human medicine. The purchasing policy favors meat products produced without the use of antibiotics that are important in human medicine as feed additives for poultry, swine and beef cattle. Growing scientific evidence shows that use of antibiotic feed additives promotes development and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can be transferred to people via air, food, soil and water, making it harder to treat infections in humans.

The American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and other leading organizations have called for an end to the use of medically important antibiotics as feed additives.

Responding to a legislative directive passed by the state legislature last year, the Agriculture Committee appointed a study group of experts from diverse agriculture and public health perspectives to explore steps the state could take to reduce the use of medically important antibiotics as feed additives for poultry, swine, and beef cattle. The study group's report recommended the purchasing policy and the five other state and federal actions, including:

1. Protocols for the prudent use of antibiotics in Maine animal health and meat assurance programs; and
2. Veterinarian education on best management practices for use of antibiotics;
3. Adequate funding for the Food and Drug Administration's review of veterinary antibiotics;
4. Federal efforts to reduce use of antibiotics that are important in human medicine as animal feed additives;
5. Funding for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank and the National Antimicrobial [antibiotics and related drugs] Resistance Monitoring System.

"The Agriculture Committee has unanimously endorsed these recommendations and has asked relevant state agencies to report back by October 31 on progress made in implementation," said Representative John F. Piotti (D-Unity), Agriculture Committee Co-Chair.

The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70 percent of the antibiotics and related drugs used in the U.S. – 25 million pounds each year – are added to animal feed for poultry, swine and beef cattle. These feed additives are not used to treat disease, but rather to promote slightly faster growth on less feed and to compensate for overcrowded, unsanitary conditions on industrial-scale farms. Half of these drugs belong to the same classes of antibiotics used in human medicine.

“Antibiotic resistance is one of the most pressing public health problems facing the nation,” said Dr. Stephen Sears, an Augusta-based specialist in infectious diseases, who served as an expert on the Committee-appointed study group. “It is important to end unnecessary uses of antibiotics, including routinely feeding these drugs to farm animals that are not sick.”

“Maine is now the first state to adopt a purchasing policy favoring meat products produced without the unnecessary use of antibiotics,” said Richard Wood, Steering Committee Chairman of Keep Antibiotics Working ([www.KeepAntibioticsWorking.com](http://www.KeepAntibioticsWorking.com)) and Executive Director of Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT). “With its leadership, Maine joins a growing number of restaurant chains, supermarkets, hospitals, and other large-scale food purchasers taking positive steps to preserve the future effectiveness of antibiotics important in human medicine.”

“I am very pleased that the State of Maine is taking the lead in encouraging a more sustainable approach to antibiotic use in animal agriculture,” said State Senator Scott Cowger (D-Kennebec), who brought this issue to the Agriculture Committee’s attention during the 2005 legislative session. “The Agriculture Committee’s actions reflect the state’s long tradition of sustainable farming and producing healthy food.”

Maine also is showing bipartisan leadership on this issue at the federal level. Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) is the lead sponsor in the U.S. Senate and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) is a cosponsor of “The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act” (S. 742/H.R. 2562) that is endorsed by 350 groups, including the American Medical Association and Maine Medical Association. U.S. Representatives Thomas Allen (D-Portland) and Michael Michaud (D-Bangor) are cosponsors of the House version of the bill, which Governor John Baldacci (D-ME) also cosponsored when he served in Congress.

Both bills would phase out use of antibiotics important in human medicine as feed additives for poultry, swine, and beef cattle. They also would require producers of agricultural antibiotics to report the quantity of drugs they sell, the claimed purpose and the dosage form of those drugs.

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