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**For Immediate Release**  
**November 19, 2003**

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## **NH Groups Urge Gregg to Support Bill to End Feeding of Medically Important Antibiotics to Livestock and Poultry**

**Portsmouth, NH** A coalition of the state's leading health and environmental groups, food producers, and food retailers today announced their support for a bipartisan bill to fight the emerging public-health crisis of antibiotic-resistant infections by reducing antibiotic overuse in meat and poultry production. The 12 state groups announced their support for the bill, "The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2003" (S. 1460/H.R. 2932), at a news conference at O'Naturals restaurant in Portsmouth. They also urged **Senate Health Committee Chair Judd Gregg** to cosponsor the bill and take a leadership role to help pass it promptly. O'Naturals restaurants, founded by Gary Hirshberg, Stonyfield Farm President and CEO, serves food made with all-natural and organic ingredients and produced without the use of antibiotics. The media was provided lunch, courtesy of O'Naturals, after the press conference.

"Antibiotics were arguably the most important public health advance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century," said Dr. John Baldwin, Associate Provost for Health Affairs and Professor of Surgery at Dartmouth Medical School. "We hope that the proposed legislation will help to reduce overuse of antibiotics in agriculture, thus helping protect all Americans against the growing crisis of antibiotic-resistant diseases."

The bill would phase out over two years the routine feeding of medically important antibiotics to farm animals that are not sick; this practice creates antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can cause infections in people. The bill is backed by 300 groups nationwide, including the American Medical Association and the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition ([www.KeepAntibioticsWorking.com](http://www.KeepAntibioticsWorking.com)). The bill would allow the continued use of antibiotics to treat sick animals and to prevent the spread of disease, when indicated.

"State Veterinarian Clifford McGinnis and I urge our congressional delegation to support this bill," said Stephen H. Taylor, Commissioner of the N.H. Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food. "We agree with the National Academy of Sciences that efforts must be made to reduce overuse of antibiotics in livestock and poultry in order to stem the growing public health risk of antibiotic resistance."

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The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 70 percent of the antibiotics and related drugs used in the U.S. each year are fed to livestock *not to treat illness*, but to make animals grow slightly faster and to compensate for overcrowded and unsanitary conditions on industrial-scale farms. The UCS estimates that more than half of those antibiotics are identical or closely related to ones used in treating human illness.

“The FDA has just issued new policies aimed at ensuring safe use of antibiotics in agriculture,” said Tamar Barlam, MD, Director of the Project on Antibiotic Resistance at the Center for Science in the Public Interest. “But the agency’s procedures are so cumbersome that applying those policies to antibiotics already on the market would take literally decades.”

"It's common sense that if an animal is not sick, it shouldn't be given antibiotics," said Gary Hirshberg, Stonyfield Farm President and CEO. “This legislation would put an end to irresponsible agricultural practices that if allowed to continue, will wipe out the effectiveness of some of the most important tools available to the medical profession for treating animals, or for that matter humans.”

“Our experience in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts is that once consumers learn more about the value of eating all-natural foods – including beef, chicken or other meats produced without the use of antibiotics – it becomes obvious to them that their food choices have a huge impact on their health- even beyond the actual consumption of the product,” said Mac McCabe, President of O’Naturals. “It’s about feeling good about your food again - not to mention it tastes great too. This is why O’Naturals customers keep coming back.”

Consumers who prefer beef, pork and poultry products raised without the routine feeding of antibiotics can find out where to buy them by visiting [www.EatWellGuide.com](http://www.EatWellGuide.com).

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