

Food and Drug Administration response to CNBC.com on Natural Resources Defense Council report on Antibiotic Use in Animals.

1/30/14

Antimicrobial resistance is a complex issue with many causes, and uses of antimicrobial drugs in both humans and animals contribute to the development of antimicrobial resistance. The FDA began a review of older approved penicillin and tetracycline products in 2001 and issued letters to sponsors of these products asking for additional safety data. This was part of the Agency's overall effort to assess available, current information regarding antimicrobial resistance concerns associated with the use of medically important antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals. Based on its review of this and other information, the Agency chose to employ a strategy that would more broadly address the concerns about the production use of medically important antimicrobials in food-producing animals.

In December 2013, the FDA began formal implementation of a strategy to phase out the use of all medically important antimicrobials, including penicillins and tetracyclines, for production purposes such as growth enhancement. Our strategy also provides for any remaining therapeutic uses (treatment, control and prevention of disease) for such drugs to be reserved for use only under veterinary supervision where they are considered necessary to assure animal health.

FDA has already had positive feedback and two major companies (Zoetis and Elanco) have already expressed their support. FDA is confident that this strategy will be fully implemented over the next three years. Once implementation of the strategy is complete, it will be illegal to use these drugs for non-therapeutic uses.

Our strategy also provides for any remaining therapeutic uses (treatment, control and prevention of disease) for such drugs to be reserved for use only under veterinary supervision where they are considered necessary to assure animal health. FDA believes that the judicious use of medically important antimicrobial drugs intended for use in food-producing animals should involve the oversight of a licensed veterinarian, given the benefit of that individual's scientific and clinical training.

The FDA is confident that its current strategy to protect the effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials, including penicillins and tetracyclines, is the most efficient and effective way to change the use of these products in animal agriculture. We note that our strategy also does not limit our authority to take future regulatory action.

Siobhan DeLancey, RVT, MPH
Deputy Director for Strategy (Acting)
Office of Media Affairs, Food & Drug Administration
siobhan.delancey@fda.hhs.gov
O: 301-796-4651
M: 202-510-4177