

## Statement on CBS News Stories on Antibiotic Use in Animals

Dr. Richard Carnevale, Vice President, Scientific, Regulatory and International Affairs

Animal Health Institute

CBS News failed to accurately portray the use of antibiotics to keep food animals healthy.

The stories failed to inform consumers about the Food and Drug Administration's stringent approval process for antibiotics used in animals – one that requires more tests for antibiotics used in food animals than for those used in humans. The approval process contains specific provisions to ensure the use of the product does not increase the burden of antibiotic resistance in humans. It mandates that animals cannot go to market until the medicine has cleared the animal's system, and additional programs are in place to test the meat to guard against harmful residues.

Antibiotics are used carefully by producers to treat disease and protect the health of the animal. In most instances, licensed veterinarians are involved in decisions about the use of these medicines.

The stories failed to provide a full explanation about what happened in Denmark when a political decision was made to ban some uses of antibiotics. The resulting animal death and disease has led to an annual increase in the use of antibiotics to treat disease. The use of antibiotics to treat disease has more than doubled since this ill-conceived ban. In addition, there's little evidence that human health has improved – which was the purpose of the ban.

Peer-reviewed studies designed to measure the impact on antibiotic resistance in humans from the use of antibiotics in animals have demonstrated there is a very low risk of resistant bacteria transferring from animals to humans. In fact, some studies indicate that lack of availability of antibiotics to treat and prevent disease can lead to increased food safety risks. According to a 2006 report by the Institute of Food Technologists, "some evidence is accumulating, especially in the poultry industry, that there are significant human health benefits from antibiotic use to prevent or control food animal disease."

Animals get sick, and careful use of FDA-approved medicines is necessary to treat and prevent illness. Policy decisions about these uses should continue to be made by FDA on the basis of careful scientific study.