

Coalition for Animal Health

July 20, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader

U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

The Coalition for Animal Health is comprised of representatives of America's veterinarians, farmers and ranchers, food and feed producers and animal medicine manufacturers. Our members work together in the common cause of producing a supply of meat, poultry, milk and eggs that is safe and healthful for all Americans. We contribute to public health by preserving and protecting animal health.

We are writing to ask that you ensure that H.R. 1549, the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act, or any part thereof, is not added to pending legislation, particularly the food safety bill or the health care reform bill. There are two important reasons why this would be problematic.

First, we agree with and support the Obama Administration's commitment to making policy decisions based on impartial and sound science. As you know, the Rules Committee last week held an unusual hearing on H.R. 1549, with a clearly unbalanced list of witnesses. While there were critics asking for the removing of antibiotics from the food production market, there was no scientific information presented as a justification for such action. Numerous risk assessments, including one conducted by the Food and Drug Administration, have shown risk levels associated with antibiotic use in agriculture that are extremely low. In fact, other nationally recognized scientific studies have shown that the removal of such important medicines could actually increase food safety risks.

Second, the food safety bill and the health care reform bill are based on the important principle of prevention. It would be ironic and inconsistent to add an amendment that would remove important tools for disease prevention used in veterinary medicine.

Indeed, when Europe removed some uses of antibiotics, the result was devastating to animal health. In response to the increase of disease and death among farm animals, producers had to administer an even greater amount of antibiotics used for the treatment of disease. Veterinary medicine has long employed prevention as the preferred option for dealing with diseases, and antibiotics are an important tool in the prevention toolbox.

We would be happy to provide any additional information to you or your staff, and we appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Swine Veterinarians
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Horse Council
American Meat Institute
American Sheep Industry Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Health Institute
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Grain and Feed Association
National Meat Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Turkey Federation
United Egg Producers
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association