



THE CENTER FOR  
FOOD SAFETY



INSTITUTE FOR  
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## **Major contributor of arsenic in animal feed halts practice**

Center for Food Safety and Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy urge continued action to remove all arsenic from animal feeds permanently

Washington, D.C., June 08, 2011 – The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced that Alpharma, a division of the pharmaceutical company Pfizer, has agreed to stop selling (for now) its arsenic-containing product, 3-Nitro, for use in chicken, turkeys and swine. In 1944, 3-Nitro became the first arsenic-containing product approved by the FDA for use in food animals.

When combined with antibiotics and other drugs, 3-Nitro is widely used by poultry producers to help control a parasitic disease in animals, but also has been used to induce greater weight gain and to create the appearance of a healthier color in meat. IATP estimated in its 2006 report, *Playing Chicken: Avoiding Arsenic in Your Meat*, that more than 70 percent of all U.S. chickens raised for meat are fed arsenic. Neither European poultry producers nor organic producers use 3-Nitro.

The sales suspension follows new FDA findings that use of 3-Nitro, which contains the organic arsenic roxarsone, also increases cancer-causing inorganic arsenic in chicken liver. The FDA did not test chicken muscle, the meat that most people eat.

The FDA stressed that it did not think the increased arsenic in chicken posed a human health threat. Inorganic arsenic, however, is known to cause multiple cancers in humans, and the science suggests that any additional exposure in food or elsewhere will increase the risk across the population of developing those cancers.

“The use of arsenic in meat production is unnecessary, and, from a public health perspective, reckless,” says Dr. David Wallinga, a physician and author of the IATP report. “Given what we know about this age-old poison, our exposure to all arsenic should be reduced—especially in food.”

Pfizer markets 3-Nitro by itself as a feed additive. However, the suspension also affects another 70 or so other products containing 3-Nitro in combination with other antibiotics and other ingredients, also marketed to poultry producers. In effect, the Pfizer move to voluntarily take its product off the market means that after 30 days, none of these 70 products will be on the

market. However, Pfizer is not giving up the NADA or FDA-approval—it could resume manufacture and sale of its product at a later point in time.

“We applaud Pfizer’s voluntary step,” says Paige Tomaselli, staff attorney with the Center for Food Safety, “but we urge the FDA to now move forward on banning all arsenic-containing additives in animal feed. These include Pfizer’s own feed additives containing nitarsone, another arsenic compound as well as those containing arsanilic acid and carbarsone. Clearly, producers can do without them, and they pose a very real threat to public health.”

As IATP and the Center for Food Safety asserted in a 2009 petition to the FDA calling for a roxarsone ban, there is abundant science both that organic arsenics are directly toxic, but also that they convert into the more worrisome inorganic forms of arsenic in chickens, in chicken meat, and in humans. The 2009 petition is also supported by Food Animal Concerns Trust, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, San Francisco Physicians for Social Responsibility, Food and Water Watch, Center for Biological Diversity, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Center for Environmental Health, Institute for a Sustainable Future, Health Care Without Harm and Ecology Center of Michigan.

On April 12, 2011, Rep. Steven Israel introduced H.R.1487, the Poison-Free Poultry Act of 2011, which would ban all uses of roxarsone as a food additive.

Read the FDA press release:

<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm258342.htm>:

Read the full petition:

<http://www.healthobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=107024>.

Read IATP’s 2006 report, *Playing Chicken: Avoiding Arsenic in Your Meat*:

<http://www.iatp.org/iatp/publications.cfm?accountID=421&refID=80529>.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. On the web at: [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org)<<http://www.iatp.org/>>

The Center for Food Safety is national, non-profit, membership organization, founded in 1997, that works to protect human health and the environment by curbing the use of harmful food production technologies and by promoting organic and other forms of sustainable agriculture. On the web at: <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org><<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/>>