



Public-Interest Groups Call on Bayer to Support FDA Ban on Antibiotic Used in Poultry Production

Measure Will Protect Human Health by Slowing Development of Diseases That Resist Treatment With Antibiotics

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WASHINGTON - Health, consumer, and other public-interest groups joined together today in applauding the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) proposed ban on the use of a valuable antibiotic to treat poultry, in light of recent sharp increases in resistance to that antibiotic in humans. The groups also sent a letter to the sole remaining manufacturer, Bayer, asking the company to consent to FDA's ban on enrofloxacin (Baytril).

FDA's proposal is based on new evidence that this product increases the danger that humans will become infected with germs that are resistant to treatment. Bayer has 30 days to decide whether to consent to FDA's proposed ban or to request a formal hearing on the proposed ban — a process that could take many months or even years.

Enrofloxacin is in a class of antibiotics called fluoroquinolones, which is one of the last new "miracle drugs," and is the treatment of choice for some human intestinal illnesses, most particularly food poisoning caused by *Campylobacter* bacteria. *Campylobacteris* the most common cause of foodborne illness in the U.S. Fluoroquinolones are also used to treat other illnesses, including urinary tract infections, bone and joint infections, and some types of pneumonia.

Physicians have used fluoroquinolones as an essential treatment for foodborne disease since 1986. Very little resistance occurred until its use in poultry began in 1995. By 1998, the Centers for Disease Control found that over 13% of foodborne *Campylobacter* were resistant to fluoroquinolones. Last year resistance rose to nearly 18%.

Abbott Laboratories had also marketed a fluoroquinolone for use in poultry, but following a recent request from the FDA, the drug company agreed to comply with the ban voluntarily.

The public-interest groups applauded Abbott for voluntarily consenting to the ban, and called on Bayer to follow Abbott's leadership in protecting the public health. "Bayer should show it truly cares more about the public's health than profits by agreeing to the FDA's proposed ban," said Richard Wood, Executive Director of Food Animals Concerns Trust, an organization which has long addressed problems related to fluoroquinolone use in poultry.

"The problem of inappropriate use of antibiotics in agriculture extends beyond the use of fluoroquinolones to prevent illness in poultry," said Dr. Rebecca Goldberg, Senior Scientist with Environmental Defense. "FDA also needs to prohibit the feeding of antibiotics to healthy animals to make them grow slightly faster and to compensate for unsanitary growing conditions. That practice accounts for an estimated one-third of all antibiotics now used in the United States," she stated.

Groups supporting FDA's action and calling for the Bayer withdrawal include:

American Public Health Association, Sarah Lister, (202) 777-2513

Center for Science in the Public Interest, Michael Jacobson,(202) 332-9110

Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance, The Rev. Jim Lewis,(302) 537-5318

Environmental Defense, Karen Florini, (202) 387-3500

Food Animal Concerns Trust, Richard Wood, (312) 860-3930

Global Resources Action Center for the Environment, Alice Slater,(212) 726-9161

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, David Wallinga,(612) 870-3418

National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Brother David Andrews,(515) 270-2634

Physicians for Social Responsibility, Sharon Newsome,(202) 898-0150, ext. 230

Union of Concerned Scientists, Margaret Mellon, (202) 223-6133