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Another Holiday Gift for Industry From the Bush Administration

FDA Reverses Ban on Extralabel use of Cephalosporins Just Before it Goes into Effect

Washington, D.C. –To get the holiday season off to a good start for industry, the FDA reversed its decision to ban the extralabel use of cephalosporin antimicrobial drugs in veterinary medicine. This move came after the Agency received over 300 comments from the animal agriculture industry and production veterinarians. In July, FDA announced the ban based on its determination that extralabel use presents a risk to public health.

The reversal simply ignores the evidence on which FDA's initial decision was based as well as other studies submitted to the Agency. One study directly correlates the use of cephalosporins in poultry with the rise of resistance to the very same drugs in the foodborne pathogen *Salmonella* in both humans and farm animals.

Cephalosporins are the antibiotic treatment of choice for serious *Salmonella* infections in humans, which cause 1,300,000 U.S. illnesses each year. Increasing resistance is a problem because it leads to more severe illnesses resulting in a greater number of hospitalizations and deaths.

“This action is yet another of the holiday gifts the Bush administration is bestowing on industry,” said Margaret Mellon, senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists. “The next Administration must reverse course and make protecting public health FDA's top priority. FDA should work with veterinarians to identify alternatives to extralabel cephalosporin use instead of continuing to allow an entrenched practice to put the public at risk.”

In addition to reissuing the ban on extralabel use of cephalosporins, Keep Antibiotics Working, a coalition of consumer, environmental, science and humane organizations, is urging the FDA under the new Obama Administration to review the approval of existing antibiotic drugs used in both human and animal medicine.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress that would require the FDA to take up the review of antibiotics such as penicillin and tetracycline to determine whether they can continue to be safely used as animal feed additives. The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA) would help combat the antibiotic resistance crisis America is currently facing. The American Medical Association, the Infectious Diseases

Society of America, and the American Academy of Pediatrics are among the more than 350 health, agriculture and other groups nationwide that have endorsed this legislation.

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