

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact: Bob Liff at (o) 917-438-4628 or (c) 917-287-7089, bliff@mrss.com
M+R Strategic Services

STEERING COMMITTEE

Center for Science
in the Public Interest

Environmental Defense

Food Animal
Concerns Trust

Humane Society
of the United States

Institute for Agriculture
and Trade Policy

Lymphoma Foundation
of America

National Catholic
Rural Life Conference

Natural Resources
Defense Council

Physicians for Social
Responsibility

Safe Tables Our Priority
(S.T.O.P.)

Sierra Club

Union of Concerned
Scientists

Waterkeeper Alliance

**WHILE FDA FIDDLES, DANGEROUS ANTIBIOTIC-
RESISTANT SALMONELLA STRIKES AGAIN**

***SALMONELLA OUTBREAK IN COLORADO, ARIZONA LINKED TO
CEPHALOSPORIN-RESISTANT MICROBE IN BEEF***

**YEAR AFTER BUSH ADMINISTRATION TABLED PLAN TO BAN
EXTRALABEL USE OF CEPHALOSPORINS, OBAMA
ADMINISTRATION MISSING IN ACTION**

***ESTIMATES ARE THAT 68,000 PEOPLE – INCLUDING MORE
THAN 5,000 CHILDREN UNDER 5 – HIT WITH RESISTANT
SALMONELLA IN LAST YEAR***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 21, 2009

A recent outbreak of beef-borne *Salmonella* Newport in Colorado and other Western states was caused by a microbe resistant to cephalosporin antibiotics. These antibiotics continue to be used “off label” a year after the Bush Administration’s Food and Drug Administration tabled plans to ban this use.

The original FDA order in July 2008 came after routine surveillance showed that cephalosporin resistance in *Salmonella* had risen rapidly over the last 10 years. The order stated the “FDA is concerned that the extralabel use of cephalosporins in food-producing animals is likely to lead to the emergence of cephalosporin-resistant strains of foodborne bacterial pathogens.” The FDA order read, “If these drug-resistant bacterial strains infect humans, it is likely that cephalosporins will no longer be effective for treating disease in those people.”

FDA scientists were especially concerned about the risk to children because children get *Salmonella* more than other age groups and cephalosporin antibiotics are the drugs most often used by physicians for treating serious *Salmonella* infections in children.

In November 2008, the FDA withdrew its proposal under pressure from agribusiness interests. A year later, an estimated 68,000 Americans – including 5,000 young children – have been infected with cephalosporin-resistant *Salmonella*, according to an analysis of data collected by the Centers for Disease Control.

The Obama administration came into office promising to let scientists make science-based decisions. Yet this FDA has refused to reinstate its ban, even after Deputy FDA Commissioner Joshua Sharfstein, M.D. told a congressional committee last July the agency was committed to tackling the problem of resistance related to livestock use of antibiotics.

While Obama's FDA has failed to act, his US Department of Agriculture, for the first time in the history of meat inspections, began *requiring* packers to recall ground beef contaminated with *Salmonella*. In all three *Salmonella* beef recalls to date, the pathogen was antibiotic resistant.

The most recent recall occurred on December 4 for 22,723 pounds of ground beef produced by a Cargill-owned plant in Fresno, California. In August, 800,000 pounds of ground beef had been recalled from the same plant due to *Salmonella* contamination linked to an outbreak in Colorado and other Western states.

According to published reports of the recalls, about two dozen people have reportedly become ill in Colorado and Arizona. In both recalls, the strain of *Salmonella* was Newport, a type often found in cattle herds. What those reports have not said, however, is that the strain of *Salmonella* Newport identified as the cause of the outbreak was found to be resistant to cephalosporins.

"FDA has known for years about the problem of cephalosporin-resistant *Salmonella*," said Steven Roach, the Public Health Program Director of Food Animal Concerns Trust. "Under industry pressure, it backed away from the opportunity to do something about the problem last year. Now we are seeing even more beef recalls and disease outbreaks."

Roach adds that Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) scientists in Colorado, where the outbreak was first recognized, told him that the samples were resistant to cephalosporins. Isolates have been sent to the CDC, which has not yet confirmed the results.

Food Animals Concerns Trust, or FACT, is part of the Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) coalition that includes the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, the Humane Society of the United States and other health, agricultural, consumer, environmental and humane groups. Information on KAW is available at www.keepantibioticsworking.com.

The coalition supported the extralabel ban when it was announced last year, opposed its withdrawal, and in November sent a letter to the FDA asking the ban be reinstated. "We are going to need new miracles to replace the miracle drugs that no longer work because of the rise of antibiotic resistant microbes," said Roach.

"It has been over a year since the FDA decided to ban extralabel cephalosporin drug use in livestock due to the unacceptable public health risk it poses," KAW Chair Richard Wood wrote in a recent letter to Sharfstein. Wood called on the FDA to reinstate the ban to combat "the growing crisis of antimicrobial resistance related to veterinary drug use in the United States."

In addition to pressuring the FDA on the ban, KAW is urging Congress to adopt the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), which would require drug companies to demonstrate to the FDA that the routine non-therapeutic use of the medications does not negatively impact human health. In essence, this would require older drugs to meet the same standard as drugs being approved today.