

Statement by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future Animal Drug User Fee Act 2014 Summary Report

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December 11, 2015—The recently released Federal Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) [Animal Drug User Fee Act \(ADUFA\) summary report](#) on 2014 sales and distribution of antibiotics for food-producing animals shows a continued rise in the sales and distribution of these drugs despite federal guidance and industry claims that use will decline under a voluntary program promoted by FDA.

There has been a 23% increase in the sales and distribution of antibiotics for food animals in the last five years, and a 4% increase in the last year alone. As demonstrated by the figure below, there has been an increase the sale and distribution in every class of drugs except sulfas (including a 57% increase in cephalosporins) from 2009-2014. We have not seen a concurrent rise in [food animal production](#), which suggests rates of use in animals produced for food in the United States are increasing.

The nontherapeutic use of antimicrobials in food animal production facilitates the generation and proliferation of drug resistant bacteria. These bacteria can leave farms and expose consumers of animal products and people living in communities where animals are produced and/or animal waste is spread on cropland as fertilizer. Exposed persons are at increased risk of contracting antibiotic-resistant infections, which are expensive and challenging to treat, and may be life-threatening. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has estimated that the United States population is burdened with 2 million resistant infections each year, 23,000 of which are fatal.

The sales and distribution of antibiotics considered important in human medicine accounted for 62% of all antibiotics approved for use in food animals. Medically-important antibiotics administered in feed and water—which largely predicts non-therapeutic use—accounted for 96% (74% in feed and 22% in water) of antibiotics sold and distributed.

The continued rise in the domestic sales and distribution of medically-important antibiotics for food animals suggests that ongoing government and industry efforts may not be enough to ensure a meaningful reduction in the use of these drugs. Congress must appropriate funds for the collection of data on the use of these drugs—by species, dose, reason for use, etc.—so we can better characterize use and identify areas that merit increased research or interventions in the event of misuse.

According to Bob Martin, Director of the Food System Policy program at the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, “FDA and industry’s voluntary approach, and the pledges by retail restaurants to purchase meat raised without routine antibiotics, are not effective according to this most recent information. A more intensive effort is needed curb the use of these important, life saving drugs.”

FDA antibiotic sales data 2009 - 2014, by drug class

