

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2017

The Honorable Thomas E. Price, M.D.
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Mr. Michael Young
Acting Deputy Secretary of
Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Price and Acting Deputy Secretary Young:

The rise of antibiotic resistance is one of the greatest threats to global health, and the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in agriculture has been linked to the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that antibiotic-resistant bacteria cause 2 million illnesses and 23,000 deaths in the United States every year.

We write today seeking information as to what actions the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are taking in light of the recent recommendations included in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report titled “Antibiotic Resistance: More Information Needed to Oversee Use of Medically Important Drugs in Food Animals”. The report noted that while much progress has been made to enhance oversight of the non-judicious use of antibiotics in animals, there are important gaps remaining.

We ask that you provide answers to several issues the GAO report raised, specifically:

1. What do the agencies under your oversight do to collect data on antibiotic use on the farm and in large-scale operations? Specifically, when will the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) complete the development of performance measures and targets for collecting on-farm data, and when will USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention complete a framework for when on-farm investigations are needed?
2. Are there currently any Memorandums of Understanding that USDA and HHS have established to conduct on-farm investigations in the event of a multi-state foodborne illness outbreak, and if so have these MOUs ever been utilized? What

were the roles of USDA and HHS and how were their actions coordinated? Was an analysis or review of the use of any MOUs ever conducted?

3. Many animal antibiotic drugs now labeled for preventative use have labels that are substantially similar or identical to those previously labeled for use as growth promotion. Regarding these labels, how will the Food and Drug Administration ensure that these antibiotics are used judiciously and not for growth promotion purposes?
4. What actions are agencies taking to ensure that practicing veterinarians and veterinary students are receiving the appropriate training to meet the aims established in Guidance For Industry #209 and as further specified in Guidance For Industry #213?

Please provide detailed answers to the questions above as soon as possible. We look forward to continuing the important progress that has been made to reduce the non-judicious use of medically important antibiotics in agriculture, and to receiving your response.

Sincerely,


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator


Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress


Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress