

Health Awareness

Understanding Antibiotic Resistance

(NAPSA)—A recent survey by Harris Interactive found that many people are confused about human antibiotic resistance and how that relates to antibiotic use in people, livestock and poultry.

How Americans Think

The survey asked consumers, “According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which of the following is the greatest contributing factor to human antibiotic resistance.” Only 41 percent correctly answered “health professionals overprescribing to people.” Eighteen percent thought CDC said use of antibiotics in livestock production was the No. 1 contributing factor, according to the CDC. Seven percent thought antimicrobial hand sanitizers to be the biggest factor; 5 percent thought the answer was drinking water; and 28 percent said they were unsure.

How Hospitals Can Help

As CDC Director Thomas Frieden, M.D., explained, “Right now, the most acute problem is in hospitals. And the most resistant organisms in hospitals are emerging in those settings because of poor antimicrobial stewardship among humans.” In fact, he said that half of all antibiotic prescriptions given to humans are unnecessary.

How Farmers Help

As for livestock and poultry, antibiotics have historically been used to treat, prevent and control disease. In the past, they were also used because they helped livestock grow more quickly.

The CDC says that it’s important to use good stewardship in the administration of antibiotics during livestock and poultry pro-



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duction and that antibiotic use for animal growth promotion should be phased out, an effort that is already under way at the request of the Food and Drug Administration and a move that the American Meat Institute (AMI) supports. Antibiotics will still be used to treat, prevent and control disease when needed, though farmers have to follow “withdrawal periods” to make sure the antibiotics are out of the animal’s system before the animal is processed. Yet the poll data showed that four in 10 consumers thought residues were common in meat and poultry products despite USDA sampling data showing that 99 percent of all samples were negative for any residue.

How to Learn More

To help close this knowledge gap, AMI created a new brochure called “The Facts About Antibiotics in Livestock & Poultry Production. Sort Fact From Fiction.” The brochure may be downloaded, free, from www.MeatAMI.com or requested via mail by sending a self-addressed, 4” x 5.5” envelope with 69 cents postage to Antibiotic Brochure, 1150 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC, 20036.