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San Francisco's Annual Report on Livestock Documents an Industry that is Mostly Unable or Unwilling to Reveal Antibiotic Usage in Livestock

Livestock producers continue to shield most of their antibiotic use, leaving consumers with limited ability to make informed choices and public health experts with little information on antibiotic usage in this industry.

San Francisco, CA — The San Francisco Department of the Environment released its annual report on the antibiotics used to produce the meat and poultry sold in the City's chain grocery stores. The goal of the report, which is required by the City's Antibiotic Use in Food Animals Ordinance, is to document the antibiotics used to produce meat and poultry products as a first step towards addressing excess antibiotic use which leads to public health ramifications specifically antibiotic resistance.

"In 2017, the Board of Supervisors passed this ordinance to address the lack of transparency in antibiotic usage in the meat and poultry industry," said Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. "It's all about informed decision making – consumers have a right to know how the food they're buying for their families is produced, and public health officials need to know whether the livestock industry is recklessly using antibiotics in the animals sold in the grocery stores of San Francisco."

The Ordinance requires grocery store chains to disclose why, when, and how antibiotics are used in the meat and poultry products they sell. Grocery chains must provide antibiotic use policies and numeric data for each raw meat and poultry product sold in their stores. Overuse or misuse of antibiotics in any sector can fuel the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

"We applaud those grocers and livestock producers that are taking the issue of antibiotic resistance seriously," said Dr. Susan Philip, Deputy Health Officer of San Francisco. "While antibiotics certainly must be used to treat livestock when they become ill, using them widely and inappropriately leads to the selection of potentially dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can cause serious illness or death in humans. Livestock producers can reduce this public health threat by reducing overuse and misuse of antibiotics so that they continue to be effective against infection in humans and animals."

Globally, antibiotic resistance has been a growing concern to public health experts for years. Successful treatment of many common health conditions such as ear, eye, and urinary tract infections, are dependent on antibiotics. Antibiotics are also important in situations of high infection risk such as organ transplants.

“The meat industry benefits from public subsidies and support, yet these producers are not held to the same level of accountability as other food industries,” said Jen Jackson, Toxics Reduction and Healthy Ecosystems Program Coordinator for the Department. “Our report clearly shows that our nation’s largest meat and poultry producers are hiding critical information about the extent to which animals are treated with antibiotics.”

In this most recent reporting cycle, grocers improved their reporting on antibiotic use policies, but missed the mark in collecting numeric antibiotic use data from livestock producers. Most livestock producers, for their part, have been recalcitrant in providing grocers numeric antibiotic use data. In fact, only two beef producers out of more than 50, and only one pork producer out of 18, provided any numeric antibiotic use data. By contrast, certain producers such as Foster Farms (chicken) and Country View Family Farms (pork) provided complete data, showing that provision of this information is feasible.

The City’s report can be found online at www.sfenvironment.org, or accessed [here](#).

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