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Medical Professionals, Public Health Advocates Call to End Overuse of Antibiotics in Food Production

Approximately 70% of U.S. antibiotics are sold for industrial livestock & poultry production; CDC estimates 23,000 Americans die from resistant infections

SPRINGFIELD, IL— NOVEMBER 28, 2018—Medical professionals and public health advocates spoke in favor of legislation to stop the overuse of antibiotics in industrial agriculture during a Senate hearing at the State Capitol on Wednesday morning. The legislation, [SB3429](#), sponsored by State Senator Daniel Biss (D, Evanston) would end the common practice of regularly feeding healthy animals antibiotics, which experts warn contributes to the rise and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, sometimes referred to as “superbugs.”

“We must do everything in our power to combat the growing public health threat of antibiotic-resistant superbugs,” said State Senator Daniel Biss, “starting with the most egregious misuse of these drugs, the entirely unnecessary overuse of antibiotics on industrial farms.”

The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) consider antibiotic-resistant bacteria among the top threats to global public health, and the CDC estimates that each year, at least 23,000 Americans die from resistant infections

The Review on Antimicrobial Resistance warns that if we do not take urgent coordinated action more people could die of antibiotic resistant infections in 2050 than die of cancer now.

“Antibiotics are a precious resource,” said Dr. Sameer Patel, Director of Antimicrobial Stewardship at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago. “Physicians, veterinarians, and farmers all should do their part to make sure these life-saving medications remain effective”.

Approximately seventy percent of antibiotics important to human health sold in the United States are sold for livestock and poultry production. Antibiotics are routinely given to livestock and poultry in their feed and water -- not to treat disease, but rather as a preventative measure to compensate for the unsanitary conditions of industrial agriculture. This routine use creates the perfect conditions for antibiotic resistance to develop. Antibiotic resistant bacteria can travel from farms into the general population on dust in the air, water, workers clothes, and even on meat sold to consumers.

“When someone in my family gets sick, I want to be confident in the medicine we have to treat them,” said [Illinois PIRG](#) Director Abe Scarr. “It’s time to end this reckless overuse of antibiotics that puts all of our families, and future generations’ health at risk.”

It is possible to raise livestock at large scales without using routine preventative antibiotics. Other nations that have done so have growing, profitable, export-oriented meat industries.

“Together, farmers and consumers can form a strong antibiotic stewardship alliance,” said Karen Hudson, Regional Associate for the [Socially Responsible Agricultural Project](#), and co-founder of [Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water](#). “The more we continue to misuse the more we all lose.”

Advocates plan to re-introduce the legislation when the new legislative session starts in January.

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About Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water (ICCAW)

Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water, a state-wide coalition of family farmers and community groups advocating for sound policies and practices that protect the environment, human health, and rural quality of life from the impacts of large-scale, industrialized livestock production facilities in Illinois. For more information about ICCAW, please go to www.iccaw.org.

About Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP)

Socially Responsible Agricultural Project provides free, professional assistance to communities working to protect themselves from factory farms and their impact on local communities and populations, and to those who are trying to reclaim agriculture by producing and marketing sustainable agricultural goods. More information can be found at www.sraproject.org.