Antibiotic Use in Beef

Myth: “Big Beef” uses antibiotics without regard for Animal welfare or human health.

Fact: Antibiotics are just one tool farmers/ranchers use to keep cattle healthy by treating and preventing the spread of illness. Cattle can pick up illness, just like humans. (You and me) Whether they are out on the pasture or in a feedlot with other cattle. Farmers/ranchers work closely with veterinarians (cattle doctors) to develop complete health programs, which include a nutritious diet, proper housing, hygiene, vaccinations and antibiotics.

How are antibiotics used? When cattle get sick farmer/ranchers/ veterinarians carefully evaluate when to administer antibiotics and use a specific dosage and treatment protocols to treat cattle. Farmers/ranchers believe not treating cattle that become sick is inhumane, as part of their responsibility to cattle health and welfare. When administering antibiotics farmers/ranchers follow label directions that provide guidelines to protect both cattle and humans that have been rigorously tested and approved by FDA. Just like human medicine, there are many protocols developed by veterinarians and scientists that they must follow very closely.

Antibiotics are used in animal medicine to prevent disease, which is important to animal and human safety.

Antibiotics used to prevent disease differs from growth promotion purposes in 3 ways: dosage, duration and level of veterinarian oversight.

Approved, antibiotics are continually monitored and must be re-evaluated annually. They only stay on the market if they continue to be proven safe.

What is being done to improve antibiotic use? Farmers/ranchers and the total livestock community are working together to continuously improve the way antibiotics are used in animals, because they care about how their practice impacts antibiotic safety and efficiency.

The beef community is always working to avoid using antibiotics that are important to both human and animal medicine as identified by the World Health Organization. FDA guidance #209 and #213 will eliminate growth promotion use of medically important antibiotics by December 2016 under extended veterinary oversite (by prescription only).

For American families who want their beef raised without antibiotics, the beef community has listened and provides choices to meet those needs. Farmers/ranchers are just like American families, we eat what we raise for you.

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