



## About Antibiotic Use in Food Animals

The American food supply is among the safest in the world, but people can still get sick from foodborne infections or from having contact with food animals. These infections can be caused by antibiotic-resistant germs.

People can get foodborne or contact infections in different ways:

- From handling or eating meat and seafood that is raw or undercooked and contaminated with resistant germs
- From handling or eating fruits and vegetables contaminated with resistant germs
- From contact with animal poop, either directly or when it gets into water for drinking, swimming, or growing crops
- From touching or caring for animals without proper handwashing

### Antibiotic Use in Animals Affects Humans, Too

Antibiotics are valuable tools for treating infections, but using antibiotics can lead to antibiotic-resistant infections in people and animals. This includes using antibiotics for human and animal health. Resistant bacteria in food can cause infections in humans. Like in humans, giving antibiotics to food animals will kill most bacteria, but resistant bacteria can survive. When food animals are slaughtered and processed, resistant germs in the animal gut can contaminate the meat or other animal products.

Two bacteria commonly spread through food—Salmonella and Campylobacter—make more than 400,000 Americans sick with antibiotic-resistant infections every year, according to CDC's 2013 AR Threats Report.

Resistant germs from the animal gut can also get into the environment, like water and soil, from animal manure. If animal manure or water containing resistant germs are used on fruits, vegetables, or other produce as fertilizer or irrigation, then this can spread resistant germs.

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Animals can get sick, just like people, and treatment should not be delayed or avoided for sick animals. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved antibiotics for responsible uses in food animals to:

- Treat disease in animals that are sick
- Control disease for a group of animals when some of the animals are sick
- Prevent disease in animals that are at risk for becoming sick

CDC supports responsible use of antibiotics in people and animals, and strongly supports the important work that the FDA and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are doing to improve antibiotic use in veterinary medicine and agriculture.

### Using Antibiotics for Growth Promotion

When animals are given antibiotics for growth promotion or increased feed efficiency, bacteria are exposed to low doses of these drugs over a long period of time. This is inappropriate antibiotic use and can lead to the development of resistant bacteria. **As of 2017, medically important drugs—those that are important to human health—are no longer allowed to be used for growth promotion or feed efficiency in the U.S.**

### What “Antibiotic Free” Food Labels Mean

Currently, there is no single definition for “antibiotic-free” on food labels. **This label is not approved by the USDA, and has no clear meaning. All animal farming must obey strict rules to ensure no antibiotics are in the animal's system before it can be slaughtered for food. This ensures there are no antibiotic residues (traces of leftover antibiotics) in your food.**

That said, “antibiotic free” does not mean the animals do not carry antibiotic-resistant bacteria. All animals carry bacteria in their gut, and some of these can be resistant germs. This is why it is important to follow simple food safety steps to prevent getting sick from food that could be contaminated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Source and for more information please see <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/food.html>

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