Squashing the Superbugs: A Proposed Multifaceted Approach to Combatting Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

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SQUASHING THE SUPERBUGS: A PROPOSED MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO COMBATTING ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT BACTERIA

LAUREN ORRICO*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1977, disco flairs were all the rage, quarterback Tom Brady was only just born, and investors had the option to buy stock in a new company called Apple,

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which was incorporated in January of that year. Economic and spending considerations were also at play in the 1970’s as President Jimmy Carter attempted to fight unemployment by allowing the federal deficit to swell and establishing job programs. Finally, 1977 saw the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issue notices announcing its intent to withdraw approval of the use of certain growth-promoting antibiotics in animals raised for food (commonly referred to as “food animals”). The FDA found that broad use of these antibiotics led to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. These bacteria were deemed detrimental to human health because they caused antibiotic-resistant infections, which were difficult to treat. Thirty-five years later, few people would suggest giving those bell-bottoms another spin or debate the success of Apple, but the threat of antibiotic resistance is growing ever larger and costing Americans billions of dollars each year.

Although government policies have evolved in the last thirty-five years, Americans still understand the importance of balancing costs and benefits, and of making sacrifices now to ensure a safe world for future generations. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria threaten the health of current and future generations if their effects are not curbed soon. According to the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), just one antibiotic-resistant organism, Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), kills more Americans every year than emphysema, HIV/AIDS, emphysema, and cancer combined.


4 Id. at ¶¶ 1–2. For clarity, the reader should note that an antibiotic is a type of antimicrobial drug. While antimicrobial resistance is also a concern, this Note uses the term “antibiotic” since animal feed largely contains antibiotics as opposed to other types of antimicrobials. For the purposes of this Note, the two terms can be used interchangeably. The reader should also note that the terms “antibiotic-resistant bacteria” and “antibiotic-resistant infections” are related, but not completely synonymous. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are the organisms that cause antibiotic-resistant infections, which in turn make humans ill. See infra Part II(B).


8 MRSA is a “staph” germ that many of us carry around daily without falling ill. NAT’L CTR. FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY INFO., NAT’L LIBRARY OF MED., NAT’L INST. OF HEALTH, MRSA
Parkinson’s disease, and homicide combined. The economic cost of antibiotic-resistant infections to the United States health care system is twenty-one billion to thirty-four billion dollars each year—along with an additional eight million hospital days for patients. These economic costs, along with the social costs of environmental degradation, animal cruelty, and adverse health effects, make cost-effective policy initiatives crucial for preserving the health and well-being of our society.

The spread of antibiotic-resistant infections is finally being widely recognized by medical professionals as a serious threat that can be slowed through proper policy. Resistant bacteria multiply when antibiotics are overused. As around half of all antibiotics used in the United States are given to animals for various reasons, overuse in food animals is a major cause of this problem. Numerous studies have linked the widespread use of antibiotics in animal feed to the development of antibiotic resistance in humans. Antibiotic resistance has led to massive food recalls and a higher prevalence of drug-resistant infections, allergies, and autoimmune diseases in children. However, current legislation fails to address the problem, preferring instead to defer responsibility to the hesitant FDA.

The FDA, although recognizing the health concern as far back as 1977, has refused to ban the use of antibiotics for disease prevention and growth promotion in food animals. However, a recent U.S. District Court ruling brought subtherapeutic use back into the public spotlight when it ordered the FDA to follow through on proceedings initiated in 1977 to ban the subtherapeutic use of certain antibiotics in

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10 Id.
11 See infra Part II(C)(2).
12 See Infectious Diseases Soc’y of Am., supra note 9.
13 Stuart B. Levy, The Antibiotic Paradox: How Miracle Drugs Are Destroying the Miracle 141–42 (1992). While the overuse of antibiotics by humans themselves also contributes to the problem, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this Note.
14 Id. at 137–38.
15 See Levy, supra note 13.
16 See infra Part II(B).
17 See infra Part III(A)–(B).
livestock. The FDA has resisted, however, pointed out the detriment that an outright ban would have on our modern factory farming system and preferring to allow large farms to solve the problem them. The FDA appealed the District Court’s ruling, and the Second Circuit reversed the decision in July 2014. While this reversal may mean the FDA is not legally obligated to continue withdrawal proceedings, the case has brought an important health threat to the public’s attention and has the potential to serve as a foundation for a reform movement.

New legislation is needed to reduce both the economic and social costs of subtherapeutic antibiotic use—taking into consideration the needs of farmers and the cost to the public of more expensive food. Even if the ruling had not been reversed, the ruling had several limitations. The ruling did not specify how the FDA must tackle the problem and only applied to a limited class of antibiotics. Accordingly, the economic and social costs of antibiotic resistance must be combated through congressionally mandated standards and requirements, mandatory FDA withdrawal of subtherapeutic antibiotic use in food animals, and procedural enforcement through the courts. These policies should be phased in and should consider costs to farmers and to the public.

Section II of this Note will provide background on the practices of the United States farming system, which fosters the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. This section will also provide background on the detrimental effects that antibiotic resistance has on human health and will briefly describe the legal history of food and drug regulations. After establishing an informational foundation, Part III will elaborate on current laws and describe the legal authority of key players, before pointing out the shortcomings in current animal feed policy and recommending the development of further regulation in this area. Additionally, Part III will propose new legislation to address social and economic costs, while also addressing the needs of farmers and meat consumers. This Note proposes a three-tiered approach for tackling the problem of antibiotic resistance based on congressional legislation, mandatory FDA standards, and proper court enforcement. Finally, this Note will conclude with a restatement of the essential issues and the way in which the proposed legislation will alleviate those problems.

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19 Id. at ¶ 20.
20 Id. at ¶¶ 11, 13. The opinion denying the FDA’s request for a time extension provides that:

The Government contends that it will suffer irreparable injury if a stay is not granted because the significant resources the FDA will be required to expend in order to commence withdrawal proceedings will “compromise FDA’s ability to pursue its goals with respect to antimicrobial resistance and animal drug licensing by diverting resources away from those programs… But the Government has not demonstrated that compliance would seriously threaten its mission or operations. Rather, it asserts that the diversion of resources will “compromise” the FDA’s pursuit of goals relating to antimicrobial resistance.

Id.

II. BACKGROUND

Subtherapeutic antibiotic use\textsuperscript{23} is necessary due to the existence of large factory farms, which keep profits high and meat prices low.\textsuperscript{24} Factory farms pack a multitude of animals into small spaces where disease can spread quickly.\textsuperscript{25} These close conditions make preventative disease treatment the only practical way to prevent mass epidemics.\textsuperscript{26} Unfortunately, this practice has the adverse effect of creating antibiotic super bugs, which spread to other animals, the earth, and humans.\textsuperscript{27} The federal government has attempted to ensure meat safety through legislation, the creation of executive agencies, and enforcement in the courts.\textsuperscript{28} These efforts have fallen short.

A. Factory Farming

The vast majority of food animals are raised on factory farms.\textsuperscript{29} Between 2002 and 2007, many small to medium sized farms gave way to massive factory farms,\textsuperscript{30} largely due to a lack of antitrust and environmental regulations, as well as indirect subsidies to the farming industry.\textsuperscript{31} Factory farms enclose high concentrations of animals in small areas and unsanitary conditions in order to keep food production costs low and profits high.\textsuperscript{32} These cramped conditions are ripe for bacterial epidemics because disease can easily spread from animal to animal.\textsuperscript{33} For these

\textsuperscript{23} See infra Part II(B).
\textsuperscript{24} Amy R. Sapkota et al., What Do We Feed to Food-Production Animals? A Review of Animal Feed Ingredients and Their Potential Impacts on Human Health, 115 ENVT. HEALTH PERSP. 663, 663 (2007).
\textsuperscript{25} Id.
\textsuperscript{26} Id.
\textsuperscript{27} See infra Part II(B).
\textsuperscript{29} See Sapkota, supra note 24.
\textsuperscript{30} Id.
\textsuperscript{31} Factory Farm Nation - How America Turned Its Livestock Farms into Factories, FOOD & WATER WATCH (Nov. 2010), http://www.factoryfarmmap.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/FactoryFarmNation-web.pdf. Farm policy encouraged over-production of crops used in livestock feed, which artificially depressed the price of feed and indirectly subsidized factory farms. Additionally, unchecked mergers and acquisitions between the largest operations led to massive industry consolidation and made it more difficult for small or family farms to compete. Finally, the lack of environmental rules, the lack of animal rights legislation, and lax enforcement allowed farms to expand easily. Id.
\textsuperscript{33} Henrik C. Wegener, Antibiotics in Animal Feed and Their Role in Resistance Development, 6 CURRENT OP. MICROBIOLOGY 439, 439 (2003).
reasons, the industry faces a fundamental problem: preventing the spread of disease among animals kept in close quarters.

During the 1950s, the food animal industry began experimenting with “nutritional factors” aimed at increasing animal growth and soon discovered that low doses of antibiotics increased growth. As the full implications of broad antibiotic use remained unknown in the 1950s, antibiotics were classified as “nutritional” and premixed into food without a prescription at low, subtherapeutic levels. Subtherapeutic doses are generally about ten to one hundred times lower than therapeutic doses, are prescribed over a longer period of time, and are not directed against a particular microorganism. Instead, subtherapeutic doses broadly protect against infection and promote growth so that animals can be slaughtered faster.

Today, in addition to antibiotics, premixed animal feed may contain hormones, animal waste products, and parts of animals not fit for human consumption. The amount of antibiotics present in animal feed has steadily increased to almost therapeutic levels, as the food animals build up resistance to the lower doses. Antibiotic resistance has been scientifically linked to across-the-board usage of subtherapeutic levels of antibiotics in food animals.

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34 See Levy, supra note 13, at 137–38. The reason antibiotics increase growth is unknown. Some believe that antibiotics have a hidden nutritional value, such as the ability to metabolize energy more efficiently; however, the nutritional value theory has been largely discredited. The most popular theory is that antibiotics either suppress the growth of certain bacteria that compete for needed nutrients, or that antibiotics inhibit production of proteins involved in adhesion and bacterial colonization of the intestinal tract. This allows animals to gain the full nutritional value of their feed but interferes with their normal processes which could have unknown adverse effects. Id.

35 Id.

36 See id. at 137.

37 See id. at 137–38.

38 Id.

39 Nicholas D. Kristof, Arsenic in Our Chicken?, N.Y. TIMES (April 4, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/05/opinion/kristof-arsenic-in-our-chicken.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss. While testing for antibiotics in poultry raised on factory farms, researchers also found arsenic, caffeine, a banned class of antibiotics, the active antihistamine in Benadryl, the active ingredient in Tylenol, and an antidepressant, which is the active ingredient in Prozac. Id.

40 See Levy, supra note 13, at 142. In the 1950s, 5–10 parts per million of tetracycline were effective to increase growth and prevent infection. Today 50–200 parts per million are used to elicit the same effect. Additionally, multiple resistances can result from chronic use of one antibiotic. These trends seem to indicate that doses will eventually reach almost therapeutic levels, and soon higher doses or new antibiotics will be needed to treat animals who are actually sick. See id. at 142–43.

41 See Guidance #209, supra note 7, at 13.
B. The Current Health Threat: Antibiotic Resistance

Subtherapeutic antibiotic use in food animals greatly increases the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in those animals. Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by bacteria.\textsuperscript{42} Although antibiotics are a great asset for treating illnesses, overuse leads to a phenomenon known as antibiotic resistance.\textsuperscript{43} Antibiotic resistance can develop in humans or animals; however, since the vast majority of antibiotics are given to food animals, their bodies are the main breeding ground for antibiotic-resistant bacteria.\textsuperscript{44} Animals’ bodies contain both bacteria that can be treated by antibiotics and bacteria that have, through random chance, genetically mutated so that antibiotics are ineffective against them.\textsuperscript{45} The latter type is known as antibiotic-resistant bacteria.\textsuperscript{46}

There is a positive correlation between the production of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and antibiotic use.\textsuperscript{47} When a food animal is given an antibiotic, the antibiotic kills off the non-resistant bacteria and the stronger, antibiotic-resistant bacteria remain.\textsuperscript{48} Once their weaker competition has been eliminated, these resistant bacteria have a perfect breeding ground in which to multiply.\textsuperscript{49} Bacteria’s rapid multiplication and high mutation rates are heightened by a bacteria free area, leading to increases in the antibiotic-resistant presence.\textsuperscript{50} Tetracyclines, one type of antibiotic most commonly used in animal feed, can affect a large variety of bacteria and select for resistance to themselves and other antibiotics.\textsuperscript{51} When food animals are

\textsuperscript{42} An antibiotic is a type of antimicrobial drug. According to the FDA:

Antimicrobial drugs are used to treat infections caused by microorganisms. The term “antimicrobial” refers broadly to drugs with activity against a variety of microorganisms, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites (such as malaria). The term “antibacterial” refers to drugs with activity against bacteria in particular. Another term commonly used to describe an antibacterial drug is “antibiotic.” This term refers to a natural compound produced by a fungus or another microorganism that kills bacteria that cause disease in humans or animals. Some antibacterial drugs are synthetic compounds; i.e., they are not produced by microorganisms. Though these do not meet the technical definition of antibiotics, they are referred to as antibiotics in common usage.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Id.} at 34–35.

\textsuperscript{44} See \textit{LEVY, supra} note 13, at 140–41.

\textsuperscript{45} See \textit{id.}

\textsuperscript{46} See \textit{id.} at 141.

\textsuperscript{47} See \textit{id.} at 142.

\textsuperscript{48} See \textit{id.} at 140.

\textsuperscript{49} See \textit{id.}

\textsuperscript{50} See \textit{id.} at 140–41.

\textsuperscript{51} See \textit{id.} at 143.
regularly given preventative doses of antibiotics, the opportunities for harmless bacteria to mutate into antibiotic-resistant bacteria are amplified.  

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are transferred from food animals to humans in several ways. The most obvious transfer occurs during human consumption of food animals containing antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Past Salmonella and E. coli outbreaks provide evidence of animal to human transmission through consumption. During these outbreaks, massive distributions of infected meat led to large food recalls, several deaths, and many more illnesses which were difficult to treat. Salmonella is a common infection in animals that was largely treatable with antibiotics prior to 1970. However, the Salmonella strains that are prevalent today are often incapable of being treated with the normal antibiotic treatment. Salmonella is now largely resistant to two to five antibiotics, depending on the strain, and once the bacteria get into a human’s bloodstream and multiply, the bacteria can cause high fevers, diarrhea, and death. Bacteria such as Salmonella, when transferred to humans through the consumption of meat, can cause irreparable harm.

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria can also spread in more indirect ways. Several studies have shown a higher presence of human carriers of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in areas near farms that use growth promoters in their animals. Stuart B. Levy, an expert in the field of antibiotic resistance, commissioned a study to test this.

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52 See id. at 142.
53 See id. at 143.
54 See id. at 148–150. In 2011, two separate Salmonella outbreaks led to massive food recalls, one of ground turkey originating from the Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation in Arkansas, and one of ground beef from a Maine based grocery store. The Salmonella strains present in ground turkey were resistant to three antibiotics including tetracycline and the ground beef strain was resistant to at least four different antibiotics. Multistate Outbreak of Human Salmonella Heidelberg Infections Linked to Ground Turkey, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION ONLINE NEWSROOM, http://www.cdc.gov/SALMONELLA/HEIDELBERG/111011/INDEX.HTML (last visited Jun. 24, 2014); Multistate Outbreak of Human Salmonella Typhimurium Infections Linked to Ground Ground Beef, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION ONLINE NEWSROOM, http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/typhimurium-groundbeef/122011/ (last visited Jun. 24, 2014).
55 See LEVY, supra note 13, at 150–53.
56 See id. at 150.
57 See id.
58 See id. Salmonella outbreaks in four Midwestern states occurred when infected beef cattle were packed, sold, and consumed. A study by the Centers of Disease Control concluded that many people who ate infected meat were unaffected since the bacteria concentration was small. However, “[t]hose who were taking antibiotics to which the Salmonella were resistant . . . provided a perfect environment for the resistant strain to multiply, leading to over clinical disease.” See id. at 152.
59 See id.
60 See id. at 143–44.
phenomenon as far back as 1975. On a small family farm, Levy’s research team fed some chickens antibiotic-laced feed and fed other chickens feed without antibiotics. Within forty-eight hours, the chickens given the antibiotic-laced feed began excreting tetracycline-resistant E. coli, and after three months the E. coli was also resistant to four other antibiotics. Moreover, the farm family began displaying an “increasing number of fecal E. coli resistant to multiple antibiotics.” Levy found this evidence demonstrative of the way bacteria can spread from food animals to the environment and other humans through manure. Bacteria in manure sink into the ground, and the ground water, and are transferred to humans through touch or consumption. Bacteria may also be transferred to farm workers through the workers’ mouth, nose, or throat when they come into contact with food animals. These workers then spread the bacteria to other humans through day to day interactions. Once antibiotic-resistant bacteria develop in animals, they can easily be spread around a farm and into the general population, thereby posing a serious threat to human health.

C. Costs of Factory Farms

1. Economic Costs

Antibiotic resistance costs the American public billions of dollars per year. The spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria seems inevitable when one considers the sheer amount of meat consumed by Americans. In 2007, the average American ate 273 pounds of meat. In order to satisfy the demand for meat, 10.378 billion U.S. land animals were slaughtered for food that year—roughly twenty-five percent of all animals killed for food in the world. Although this number has decreased slightly


62 Id.

63 Id.

64 Id.

65 Id.

66 See id.

67 See id. at 144.

68 See id. at 144–45.

69 See id. at 147–48.


71 Id.

72 Id.
since 2007, in 2011 the average American consumed 185 pounds of chicken, turkey, pork and beef, proving that the American appetite for meat is still substantial. This massive appetite, combined with an increase in antibiotic resistance, has been costly for the American public.

Antibiotic resistance greatly increases healthcare costs due to longer hospital stays and the costs of alternative disease treatments. In 1998, the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine noted that antibiotic-resistant bacteria increased US health care costs by a minimum of four to five billion dollars annually, while in 2009 the total health care cost of antibiotic-resistant infections was estimated to be over $20 billion annually. In contrast, eliminating antimicrobials would only cost each American five to ten dollars per year, thereby saving a total of 1.3 to 3.7 billion dollars annually. To further break down the cost, a 2005 analysis found that a hospital stay was $6,000 to $10,000 more expensive for a person infected with a resistant bacterium as opposed to an antibiotic-susceptible...


74 On average, each American consumes around 110 grams of protein a day, about twice the federal government’s recommended allowance; of that, about 75 grams come from animal protein. The recommended level is itself considered by many dietary experts to be higher than necessary. It’s likely that most of us would do well on around 30 grams of protein a day, virtually all of it from plant sources. See Mark Bittman, Rethinking the Meat-Gazzler, N.Y. Times (Jan. 27, 2008), http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/weekinreview/27bittman.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0; see also infra Part III(C) (arguing that even if eliminating the root cause of antibiotic resistance means meat prices will rise, Americans can combat those costs and be healthier by eating less meat.).


79 The U.S. population in 1999 was 272,690,813 and the estimated cost per person of eliminating antimicrobials was $5 to $10 per person. Id.; POPULATION ESTIMATES PROGRAM, POPULATION DIVISION, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, ST-99-1, STATE POPULATION ESTIMATES AND DEMOGRAPHIC COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE: JULY 1, 1998 TO JULY 1, 1999 (1999), http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/state/st-99-1.txt. Accordingly, the total cost of eliminating antimicrobials in 1999 was between $1.3 and $2.7 billion. This figure is $1.3–$3.7 billion less than the $4–$5 billion antimicrobials raise costs by.
Developing new antibiotics to replace those to which the new strands are resistant will require around ten years and an investment of $800 million to $1.7 billion.

2. Social Costs

The greatest social cost is the suffering and death caused by antibiotic-resistant infections. Otherwise healthy adults and children can enter hospitals for routine procedures and die from MRSA and other antibiotic-resistant infections now prevalent in hospitals. In 2004, IDSA estimated that “[a]bout 2 million people acquire bacterial infections in U.S. hospitals each year and 90,000 die as a result.”

These diseases are even more dangerous to individuals with already compromised immune systems. Seventy percent of hospital-acquired infections are resistant to at least one antibiotic. When a patient has an antibiotic-resistant infection, hospital stays are extended by an average of 6.4 to 12.7 days. “During this time, patients are unable to work and . . . lose wages.” Increased hospital stays cost U.S. households over thirty-five billion dollars annually in the form of lost wages. The increased prevalence of antibiotic-resistant infections can transform hospitals, the places individuals go for health treatments, into health threats due to the presence of MRSA and other infections.

In addition to their negative effects on human health, factory farms have a negative impact on the environment and make life unpleasant for the animals themselves. “Globally, greenhouse gas emissions from all livestock operations account for 18% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, exceeding those from the transportation sector.” Massive amounts of greenhouse gases are created due to improper management of animals, manure, and soil on factory farms. Moreover, the amount of waste produced by mass confinement is a problem in and of itself. The waste must be disposed of properly, and over-fertilization of pastures can lead to

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81 See INFECTIOUS DISEASES SOC’Y OF AM., supra note 76, at 3. The report also notes the incentive for pharmaceutical companies to produce new, more lucrative drugs that treat chronic conditions as opposed to developing new, less lucrative, antibiotics. For example, “[i]n 2002, out of 89 new drugs, no new antibiotics were approved.” Id. at 5.

82 Id. at 5.

83 Id. at 5.

84 Id. at 13.

85 Id. at 3.

86 ALLIANCE FOR THE PRUDENT USE OF ANTIBIOTICS, supra note 77, at 2.

87 Id.

88 Id.

89 PEW COMM’N ON INDUS. FARM ANIMAL PROD., supra note 78, at 27.

90 Id.

91 Id. at 23.
surface and ground water contamination with extra nutrients, which the land cannot absorb. Water and other energy resources are also expended at a much higher rate on factory farms. These cramped and unsanitary conditions are particularly unpleasant for the animals, whose lives are truly unpleasant and short. Chickens are debeaked and declawed, and pigs are kept in small confinement crates and can drop dead from the stress of being confined. While cattle are generally allowed to graze freely, cattle raised for veal are fed a poor diet to stop certain types of development and placed in stalls too small for them to move in, hindering all muscle development. The substantial economic and social effects of factory farming and antibiotic resistance make the factory farming model unsustainable, costly, and detrimental to both human and animal health.

D. Overview of Food and Drug Regulations

While factory farming methods are not directly regulated, the federal government does play a role in regulating meat, milk, and eggs before they are consumed by Americans. These regulations have been strengthened over time, but are far from perfect. Federal regulation of food and drugs started with the signing of the Food and Drugs Act (Wiley Act) on June 30, 1906 by President Roosevelt. Administered by the Bureau of Chemistry under the federal commerce clause power, the Act prohibited the interstate transportation of unlawful food and drugs. The law sought

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92 Id.
93 Id. at 27, 29. Water resources are stressed by possible contamination and the sheer amount of water necessary to keep the animals hydrated. Id. at 27. Fossil fuels are also expended at a much higher rate along with industrial fertilizers and other synthetic chemicals. Id. at 29.
95 Id. at 415–19. This is called porcine stress syndrome. Id. at 418–19. Pigs are stressed and confused by crowding and being ushered from pen to pen. Id. at 419. This can overwhelm the animals’ senses and lead them to bite the tails of other pigs or accidentally trample their own young. Id. at 418–19.
96 Id. at 420–21.
97 See generally THE PEW COMM’N ON INDUS. FARM ANIMAL PROD., supra note 78.
98 7 C.F.R. pt. 54 (West 2014).
100 7 C.F.R. pt. 57 (West 2014).
102 U.S. CONST. art. I, § 8, cl. 3; Wiley Act § 4.
103 FDA History - Part I, supra note 101.
to promote proper labeling and also prohibited the addition of any ingredients that would substitute for food, conceal damage, pose a health hazard, or constitute a filthy or decomposed substance.\textsuperscript{104} However, the head of the Bureau of Chemistry, Harvey Washington Wiley, often clashed with Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson due to Wiley’s skepticism of chemical additives.\textsuperscript{105} In an effort to undercut his administrative authority, Wilson created the Board of Food and Drug Inspection in 1907 to establish agency policy and enforce the law.\textsuperscript{106} During this time, Congress passed numerous other laws governing specific foods, and the Bureau of Chemistry developed many specific unofficial standards.\textsuperscript{107} This confusion made it difficult for manufacturers to comply and for the courts to know which standards to enforce.\textsuperscript{108}

1. The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act

The confusion over regulations left a clear need for legally mandated, specific, and uniform standards. This gap was filled by the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) enacted in 1938. The FFDCA gave the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to oversee the safety of food, drugs, and cosmetics.\textsuperscript{109} The FFDCA sought to fix the shortcomings of the Wiley Act by meeting the need for legally mandated quality and identity standards for foods and by expanding the authority to regulate false claims.\textsuperscript{110} The FFDCA helped prevent harmful drugs from entering the market by mandating pre-market approval of all drugs and formally authorizing factory inspections.\textsuperscript{111} Additionally, the Act provided the FDA with injunctive abilities and enforcement tools.\textsuperscript{112}

Since its passage, the FFDCA has been supplemented by several amendments. The 1958 Food Additives Amendment expanded the FDA’s regulatory authority over animal food additives and drug residues in animal-derived foods.\textsuperscript{113} Under the

\textsuperscript{104} See id.
\textsuperscript{105} See id.
\textsuperscript{106} Id.
\textsuperscript{107} Id.
\textsuperscript{108} Id.
\textsuperscript{110} See FDA History - Part II, supra note 109.
\textsuperscript{111} Id.
\textsuperscript{112} Id.
\textsuperscript{113} The term “food additive” is defined in 21 U.S.C.A. § 321(s) (West 2014), in pertinent part, as follows:

any substance the intended use of which results or may reasonably be expected to result, directly or indirectly, in its becoming a component or otherwise affecting the characteristics of any food . . . if such substance is not generally recognized, among experts qualified by scientific training and experience to evaluate its safety, as having been adequately shown through scientific procedures (or, in the case of a substance used in food prior to January 1, 1958, through either scientific procedures or
Food Additives Amendment, drugs used in feed were considered additives.114 "The Animal Drug Amendments of 1968 combined veterinary drugs and additives into a unified approval process under the authority of the Bureau of Animal Drugs in the FDA."115 The DES proviso of 1962 was a step backwards for food policy, permitting the use of possible carcinogens in food animals as long as residues did not remain in edible tissues.116 As determining that no residue remained in tissues proved impossible, the provision was amended to allow for an “insignificant amount of experience based on common use in food) to be safe under the conditions of its intended use; except that such term does not include . . . a new animal drug.


each clause also contains an exception, termed the “Diethylstilbestrol (DES) Proviso,” that permits administration of such substances to food-producing animals where: (1) The food additive, color additive, or new animal drug will not adversely affect the animal and (2) no residue of the food additive, color additive, or new animal drug will be found in any edible portion of that animal by a method of examination prescribed or approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services by regulation . . . . $S_o$ is currently defined as the concentration of the compound of carcinogenic concern in the total diet of test animals that corresponds to a maximum lifetime risk of cancer to the test animals of 1 in 1 million . . . FDA will assume that the $S_o$ corresponds to the concentration of residue of carcinogenic concern in the total human diet that represents no significant increase in the risk of cancer to people. The concentration, derived from the $S_o$, of residues of carcinogenic concern in a specific edible tissue is termed the $S_{o\tau}$. This rule changes the definition of $S_o$ so that it is primarily defined as “the concentration of a residue of carcinogenic concern in the total human diet that represents no significant increase in the risk of cancer to the human consumer . . .” and secondarily as “the concentration of test compound in the total diet of test animals that corresponds to a maximum lifetime risk of cancer in the test animals of 1 in 1 million.” The change in this rule to the definition of $S_o$ is intended to enable the Center for Veterinary Medicine to consider allowing the use of alternative procedures to satisfy the DES Proviso without requiring the development of a second, alternative, set of terminology.

residue.” The FDA has discretion to prohibit the use of an additive if there is no reliable method to measure and confirm whether the additive contains carcinogenic residues at or above the no residue level. These requirements were further broadened in 2012.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), signed into law by President Obama on January 4, 2011, constitutes the most recent expansion of FDA powers. The law institutes sweeping reform and aims to ensure a safe food supply by shifting the focus from contamination response to contamination prevention. The FSMA provides the FDA with additional enforcement authority to promote compliance before problems occur and to more effectively respond to them when they do. The law also directs the FDA to build an integrated national food safety system in partnership with state and local authorities and puts more responsibility on food producers to institute plans to make food safer. FSMA provides the FDA with additional enforcement and prevention tools which, if properly utilized, could improve food safety.

2. The Food and Drug Administration

The FDA is charged with broad responsibility to regulate food, drugs, and cosmetics. The FDA is an executive agency within the Department of Health and Human Services at the same administrative level as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institute of Health (NIH). The Agency plays a regulatory and policy role in promoting the public health by ensuring that “foods are safe, wholesome, sanitary and properly labeled,” and that “human and veterinary drugs are safe and effective.” In addition to drugs used on humans, the FDA has a role in regulating drugs used in food animals before the animals are consumed. Additionally, the Agency protects the financial interests of consumers by keeping

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117 Regulation of Carcinogenic Compounds in Food-Producing Animals, 77 Fed. Reg. at 50,591.
118 Id.
119 Id.
121 Id.
123 Id.
124 Id.
127 About the Center for Veterinary Medicine, FOOD & DRUG ADMIN., http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofFoods/CVM/default.htm (last visited April 16, 2014).
food and drugs reasonably priced and readily available.\textsuperscript{128} While the Agency has consistently relied on prevention and industry guidance, rather than periodic prosecutions, to promote health, legal and equitable remedies can be enforced both internally and through the courts.\textsuperscript{129} Outsiders may also propose FDA regulatory action, which can be adopted or rejected.\textsuperscript{130} The FDA’s role in food policy and its power to enforce compliance have steadily expanded since the Agency’s creation.

III. ARGUMENT

A. Current Laws

The authority to regulate animal feed and food animals is spread between the states, Congress, and several executive agencies. The manufacturing of animal feed is regulated by both state and federal agencies.\textsuperscript{131} FDA inspectors have authority under the FFDCA to inspect the facilities of feed manufactures or to contract inspection duties out to state agencies, which conduct inspections in accordance with FDA procedures.\textsuperscript{132} All animal feed that contains a new animal drug is regulated by the FDA through the issuance of feed mill licenses.\textsuperscript{133} The Animal Drug User Fee Act authorizes the FDA to collect fees for animal drug applications and other services and to channel those funds to collect information about antimicrobial drug use.\textsuperscript{134} The Act also requires antimicrobial drug sponsors to self-report the amount of drugs sold annually and to provide the public with a copy of the report.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{128} “The FFDCA and its legislative history make it clear that Congress intended the statute to protect the financial interests of consumers as well as their health.” See United States v. Lane Labs, 427 F.3d 219 (3rd Cir. 2005).

\textsuperscript{129} See, e.g., Current Good Manufacturing Practices for Finished Pharmaceuticals 21 C.F.R. § 211 (West 2012); see also 21 U.S.C.A. § 360b (West 2012). FDA regulations focus on preventing unsafe drugs from entering the market through a mandatory approval process and good manufacturing practice recommendations, which help inform manufacturers of minimum standards which must be met before a drug can enter the market.

\textsuperscript{130} If an idea originates outside the FDA, it must get a sponsor within the FDA or a petition must be initiated, which can be filed by any person. 21 C.F.R. § 10.30 (West 2012). The FDA may call for specific adoption of a draft proposal by the Agency in the form of a proposed regulation. The regulation is circulated within the Agency and, if classed as “significant,” the FDA is required by the order to examine alternatives, study future cost consequences, and otherwise prepare itself to justify the proposed regulatory actions. Id.

\textsuperscript{131} There are several types of animal feed manufacturers. Feed mills are plants that combine ingredients, which may or may not include antibiotics, to produce an appropriate mix for a particular age or species of animal. There are operations that feed ruminant animals, rendering plants which process animals unfit for human consumption, and protein blenders who blend processed animal and vegetable protein. While the FDA is responsible for overseeing these manufacturers, states often have added regulations. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, GOV’T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO/RCED-00-255, FOOD SAFETY: CONTROLS CAN BE STRENGTHENED TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DISEASE LINKED TO UNSAFE ANIMAL FEED (2000), available at http://www.gao.gov/new.items/rc00255.pdf.

\textsuperscript{132} Id. at 6–7.

\textsuperscript{133} Id. at 6.

Several other executive agencies also play a role in the regulation of animal feed. The Environmental Protection Agency sets legal limits on the amount of pesticide residue in or on animal feed, and the FDA enforces these limits. The Department of Transportation regulates the transportation of animal feed, and the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service regulates the health and care of food animals. Finally, the CDC is charged with monitoring, investigating, controlling, and preventing public health problems.

Within the FDA, the Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) ensures that animal drugs and medicated feeds are safe and effective for their intended uses and that food from treated animals is safe for human consumption. The CVM approves new animal drugs which have been shown to be safe and monitors drug use through surveillance and compliance programs. Animal feed must be “pure and

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Fees/AnimalDrugUserFeeActADUFA/ucm042890.htm (last visited Jan. 26, 2013). ADUFA was originally passed in 2003 and was renewed on August 14, 2008 by President Bush. As the FDA explains:

[t]he new amendments extend ADUFA until 2013. ADUFA amends the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to authorize FDA to collect fees to enhance the performance of the new animal drug review process and ensure that new animal drug products are safe and effective for animals as well as for the public with respect to animals intended for food consumption . . . . In addition, this reauthorization encourages increased communications between FDA and industry, and also provides for improvements to the information technology infrastructure of animal drug review, providing a tool which enables industry to submit drug applications electronically and gives reviewers the ability to evaluate those applications online. The reauthorization of ADUFA will generate $98 million in user fees over five years (FY 2009 – FY 2013).

Id.

135 See ADUFA Law, supra note 134.

136 See Gov’t Accountability Office, supra note 131; see also 21 U.S.C.A. § 346a (West 2013).

137 See Gov’t Accountability Office, supra note 131. The U.S.D.A. is also responsible “for improving agricultural productivity while contributing to the nation’s economy and public health.” Id.

138 Id.

139 See Food & Drug Admin., supra note 127.

140 The United States General Accounting Office has written a memo pointing out some of the shortcomings with these current regulations. The memo states, in pertinent part:

FDA has taken some actions to better ensure the safety of animal feed, but problems such as lack of awareness of FDA’s regulation, delays in issuing a new FDA regulation to strengthen controls over the bacterial contamination of feed, and the Department of Transportation’s failure to issue regulations for the safe transport of animal feed, could lead to human illnesses. In 1997, FDA issued a regulation to prevent BSE [(mad cow disease)] in the United States. To assess compliance with this regulation, FDA and state inspectors have visited over 9,100 firms . . . nearly 1,700 firms were not aware of the regulation and thus could produce or use animal feed that was not in compliance.

See Gov’t Accountability Office, supra note 131.
wholesome, produced under sanitary conditions, truthfully labeled, without any harmful substances.” The CVM has worked closely with the interagency Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance, composed of representatives from the FDA, the CDC, and the NIH, to research antibiotic resistance, monitor antibiotic resistance, and develop industry guidances. However, these studies have not been translated into action.

B. Shortcomings of Current Food Policy

1. Limits of FDA Action

The FDA is an executive administrative agency that shares powers with, and may be regulated by, all three branches of the federal government, as well as the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). As an executive agency, the FDA was created by an enabling act of Congress and may make rules regulating food and drugs within the scope of authority delegated. It is subject to legislative oversight and often has to answer tough questions from Congress and consider Congress’s recommendations. In addition to its legislative role, the FDA is an executive agency with the power to enforce compliance within its field, subject to presidential oversight. Although the FDA possesses some internal judicial power, almost all administrative agency procedures are subject to review by the federal courts.


143 The taskforce monitored antimicrobial resistance through the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS). NARMS monitors trends in antibiotic resistance, targeting key bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli. The Agency gathers animals isolated from a variety of sources around the country and tests for antimicrobial resistance and then reports on their findings. NARMS Program, FOOD & DRUG ADMIN. (Sept. 8, 2010), http://www.FDA.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/AntimicrobialResistance/NationalAntimicrobialResistanceMonitoringSystem/ucm059089.htm.

144 See TERMINI, supra note 142.

145 See id. at 22.

146 The ceding of legislative rulemaking authority to an executive branch is justified under the Necessary and Proper Clause to ensure that food and drugs which are within interstate commerce are appropriately regulated. See U.S. CONST. art I, § 8. Congress delegates this authority to the FDA through an enabling act. 21 U.S.C.A. 393b.

147 See TERMINI, supra note 142, at 24.

148 Id. at 24.

149 Id. at 21.

150 Id. at 21.
addition to case law, executive review, and congressional review, the FDA is governed by the APA, which has standardized procedures agencies must follow.\footnote{Id. at 18.}

Congressional overview has had a detrimental effect on the FDA’s formation of new animal feed policy. In 1977, the FDA announced its intent to withdraw approval of the use of certain antibiotics for growth promotion and feed efficiency, noting that such practices are detrimental to human health.\footnote{Natural Res. Def. Council, Inc. v. U.S. Food & Drug Admin., 884 F. Supp. 2d 127, 132 (S.D.N.Y. 2012). The determination to withdraw approval was based upon the recommendations of a 1970 commission composed of members of the FDA, NIH, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, and CDC, as well as industry members. In 1972, the task force concluded that: (1) subtherapeutic antibiotic use in animal feed favors the development of antibiotic resistance, (2) animals can pass these bacteria on to humans, (3) the number of bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics has increased due to subtherapeutic use, (4) antibiotic-resistant bacteria has been found in meat, and (5) “the prevalence of antibiotic resistant bacteria in humans has increased.” \textit{Id.} The commission recommended “antibiotics used in human medicine be prohibited from use in animal feed unless they met safety criteria established by the FDA and several specific drugs, including penicillin and tetracclines, be reserved for therapeutic use . . . .” \textit{Id.} at 132–33.} The FDA issued legal notices of hearings, giving the public the opportunity to prove that the drugs were in fact safe.\footnote{Id.} However, no hearings or further action resulted, despite citizen petitions urging the Agency to follow through.\footnote{Id.} This abrupt shift in momentum was likely due to congressional pressure. During the 1970’s and 1980’s, congressional committees issued three reports which the FDA interpreted as requests to postpone the withdrawal hearings pending further research.\footnote{Id.} In response to these requests, the FDA commissioned more research instead of moving forward with hearings.\footnote{Id.} While the FDA has never said they postponed the hearings due to congressional requests, the FDA’s dependence on Congressional funding, along with its reliance on Congress as a source of authority, provides a strong motive to take Congress’s wishes into account.\footnote{Id.} The sequence of events suggests that congressional oversight has hindered, rather than supported, FDA policy.

Since 1977, the FDA has refused to take a firm stance on subtherapeutic antibiotic use, issuing interpretive rules on usage instead of substantive legally binding rules.\footnote{See \textit{Termini}, supra note 142, at 22. Not only does Congress hold the “power of the purse” but they can also define the scope of the Agency’s power through legislation. \textit{Id.} Added complications arise as the FDA is one department within the Department of Health and Human Services and requests for additional funds must go through the department bureaucracy and the Office of Management and Budget. \textit{Id.}} Executive agencies create three types of rules: substantive,
interpretive, and procedural. Substantive rules are legally binding and enforceable regulations which define “the legal obligations and rights of those who are subject to the agencies authority.” In contrast, interpretive rules have no binding legal effect and are merely suggestions to the industry. Instead of creating legally binding substantive rules, the FDA has issued a number of Guidances, a type of interpretive rule.

Guidance for Industry #152 discusses a recommended approach for assessing the safety of antimicrobial new animal drugs. The Guidance reaffirms the FDA’s belief that human exposure to antibiotic-resistant bacteria is harmful to human health and recommends that producers consider such risks when using antimicrobials. However, the Guidance does not create any legally binding responsibilities or recommendations, and explicitly states that it “describes the Agency’s current thinking on the topic and should be viewed only as guidance, unless specific regulatory or statutory requirements are cited.” Likewise, Guidance for the

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159 Procedural rules are largely defined in the A.P.A. to promote uniformity among executive agencies and will be further discussed in the next subsection. See NRDC, infra Part III(B)(2).

160 See TERMINI, supra note 142, at 19.

161 See id. at 19.

162 U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMIN., GUIDANCE FOR THE INDUSTRY #152: EVALUATING THE SAFETY OF ANTIMICROBIAL NEW ANIMAL DRUGS WITH REGARD TO THEIR MICROBIOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON BACTERIA OF HUMAN HEALTH CONCERN (2003), available at http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/GuidanceComplianceEnforcement/GuidanceforIndustry/ucm052519.pdf. The guidance contains a clear disclaimer which reads as follows:

This guidance represents the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA’s) current thinking on this topic. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person and does not operate to bind FDA or the public. You can use an alternative approach if the approach satisfies the requirements of the applicable statute and regulations. If you want to discuss an alternative approach, contact the FDA staff responsible for implementing the guidance. If you cannot identify the appropriate staff, call the appropriate number listed on the title page of this guidance.

Id.

163 Id.

164 Id. The guidance ranks certain antimicrobial agents by their importance to human medicine and asks that the critically important antimicrobials be used less frequently. The FDA also provides the following summary of the guidance:

FDA recommends that sponsors choosing to use this process:
• Prepare a hazard characterization (described in pages 7 through 8) and submit the characterization to the FDA for review.
• After review of the hazard characterization, FDA and the sponsor may discuss whether a risk assessment needs to be completed and, if so, what information is recommended for completion of the risk assessment.
• Prepare the risk assessment and submit the assessment to the FDA for review.
• Following review of the safety package as a whole, including the risk assessment, FDA will determine the risk estimation and associated risk management steps applicable to the proposed conditions of use for the antimicrobial new animal drug.

165 Id. (The use of the word “should” in Agency guidance means that something is suggested or recommended, but not required).
Industry #209 explains the importance of the judicious use of antimicrobials, even going so far as to state “the use of medically important antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals should be limited to those uses that are considered necessary for animal health.”166 This Guidance lacks legal authority and leaves room for loopholes. For example, a farmer could simply state that subtherapeutic use was medically necessary.167 The fact that the food animal industry has largely ignored these Guidances, without any legal consequences, makes the need for binding substantive rules to combat antibiotic resistance apparent.


One court recently attempted to force the FDA to take action by enforcing procedural rules.168 In May 2011, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) filed a citizen petition seeking a court order to compel the FDA to follow through on the proceedings it initiated in 1977.169 The court considered (1) whether the FDA was legally required to act and (2) whether the court could legally compel them to act.170 The APA authorizes suits by “a person suffering legal wrong because of agency action, or adversely affected or aggrieved by agency action within the meaning of the relevant statute.”171 Reviewing courts can compel agency action unlawfully withheld or unreasonably delayed under this provision if the action was a discrete action that the Agency was legally required to take.172 The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York granted the plaintiffs’ motion for summary judgment and held that, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. 360b(e)(1), once the FDA found that the subtherapeutic use of penicillin and tetracyclines in animal feed was unsafe to humans, the Agency was statutorily obligated to withdraw approval of those uses unless drug sponsors demonstrated the safety of those drugs.173

166 See Guidance #209, supra note 7.

167 Id. A firm definition of what constitutes subtherapeutic use could help to close some of these loopholes, although the FDA and the courts will likely play a role in determining if use is medically necessary, on a case-by-case basis.


169 Id. at 137.

170 Id. at 137–38.

171 Id. at 131; see also, 5 U.S.C.A § 702 (West, 2014); Norton v. S. Utah Wilderness Alliance, 542 U.S. 55, 61 (2004).

172 NRDC, 884 F. Supp. 2d at 138–40. Limiting court review to discrete actions serves an important policy purpose as it “precludes a court from authorizing ‘broad programmatic attack[s]’” on agency policy, and the limit to legally required actions ensures that a court will not interfere with an agency's discretionary functions. Id. (quoting SUWA, 542 U.S. at 64–65). Here, the court found that once an animal drug was deemed unsafe, several discrete actions were required including issuing notice of intent to withdraw approval, announcing the opportunity for hearing, holding a hearing, and finally withdrawing approval.

173 Id. at 151.
The 1977 withdrawal procedures were initiated based on the FDA’s findings that the use of certain drugs was unsafe for humans pursuant to 21 U.S.C. 360b(e)(1). Guidance #152 and Guidance #209 described the serious health threat that antimicrobials pose and suggested non-binding recommendations for combatting antibiotic resistance. Accordingly, the FDA issued a proposal to withdraw approval of subtherapeutic use in animal feed unless data was submitted within the next two years which conclusively proved use was not a threat to human health. Over the next two years, the CVM reviewed evidence submitted by interested parties and recommended continuing withdrawal procedures for subtherapeutic use of penicillin and tetracycline. The FDA then issued notice of withdrawal hearings and received twenty requests for hearings. The District Court ruled that once the CVM and the FDA followed procedures which proscribed clear and discrete actions for withdrawal of approval, the statutory language, “shall,” legally required the Secretary of Health to continue with the withdrawal proceedings, barring presentation of any important new information. Although the findings were

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174 Once the Secretary found the drug to be unsafe, withdrawing the drug was required unless new evidence emerged during the hearing. 21 U.S.C. 360, in pertinent part, reads as follows:

the Secretary shall, after due notice and the opportunity for hearing to the applicant, issue an order withdrawing approval of an application . . . with respect to any new animal drug if the Secretary finds that . . . (B) that new evidence not contained in such application or not available to the Secretary until after such application was approved . . . evaluated together with evidence available to the Secretary when the application was approved shows that such drug is not shown to be safe for use under the conditions of use upon the basis of which the application was approved.


175 GUIDANCE #209, supra note 7; see also GUIDANCE #152, supra note 162.

176 NRDC, 884 F. Supp. 2d at 130.

177 Id. at 133.

178 Id. at 133–34.

179 Id. at 141. The court relied on a plain reading of the text based on grammatical rules as described below:

The “after due notice and opportunity for hearing” clause is setoff by commas and immediately precedes the words “issue an order withdrawing approval,” indicating that the “notice” clause modifies the “issue an order” clause and not the findings clause. See United States v. Liranzo, 729 F.Supp. 1012, 1014 (S.D.N.Y.1990) (interpreting a modifier to apply to the verb closest to it) (citing W. Strunk, Jr. & E.B. White, The Elements of Style 30 (3d ed. 1979)). Accordingly, the statute only requires the Secretary to give notice and provide an opportunity for a hearing before issuing an order of withdrawal and not before making findings. Under this reading, if the Secretary finds that an animal drug has not been shown to be safe, he is statutorily required to withdraw approval of that drug, provided that the drug sponsor has notice and an opportunity for a hearing . . . If, after a hearing, the drug sponsor has not met his burden of proving the drug to be safe, the Secretary must issue a withdrawal order.

Id. at 141–42; see also, Food & Drug Admin. v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., 529 U.S. 120, 134 (2000) (“If the FDA discovers after approval that a drug is unsafe or ineffective, it ‘shall, after due notice and opportunity for hearing to the applicant, withdraw approval’ of
initiated by the Director of the CVM, and not the Secretary of the FDA, the Director was delegated the authority to make statutorily enforceable findings with the authority to issue notice of hearings. The CVM Director’s finding that the drugs were unsafe initiated a legally binding mandate to continue the withdrawal proceedings. Accordingly, the court found that the FDA must re-issue a notice of the proposed withdrawals and provide an opportunity for a hearing to the relevant drug sponsors. If the drugs were not proven safe, approval must be withdrawn. There were several limitations on this ruling. The court stipulated the limitations of its holding, emphasizing that it was not ordering the FDA to ban the drugs outright, only to continue their mandated procedures. If the sponsors raised a substantial fact, the FDA must hold a public evidentiary hearing to determine if the sponsors could prove that the drug is safe. Otherwise, the Commissioners had to issue a withdrawal order. Additionally, the drugs at issue were only penicillin and tetracycline antibiotics, leaving many other medically important antibiotics on the market.

The N.R.D.C. filed a second suit against the FDA alleging a violation of the FDA’s procedural duty to take the citizen petitions seriously. Specifically, the NRDC alleged that the FDA violated section 706(2) of the Administrative Procedures Act, and section 360b(e) of the FFDCA, when it denied two citizen petitions requesting withdrawal of approval for subtherapeutic use of certain classes of antibiotics in food-producing animals. Both petitions provided credible scientific evidence to support their requests and both petitions received the same

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180 N.R.D.C., 884 F. Supp. 2d at 145–46. While the statutory language is ambiguous, the court traced a clear path of delegation of authority from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, to the Commissioner of the FDA, to the Director of the BMV to issue notices. Id.

181 Id.

182 Id. at 151.

183 Id.

184 Id. Judge Katz emphasized the limitations that the court is not ordering a particular outcome, if the drug companies prove the drug is safe approval cannot be withdrawn. Id.

185 Id.

186 Id.

187 Id. at 131–32.


189 The first petition was in 1999 and requested that “the agency ‘rescind approvals for subtherapeutic uses in livestock of any antibiotic used in (or related to those used in) human medicine’ . . . it named several specific classes of antibiotics for which it sought withdrawal, including penicillin, tetracyclines, erythromycin, lincomycin, tylosin, and virginiamycin.” The 2005 petition made similar request. Id. at 324–26.
response from the FDA. The FDA provided an initial response detailing the complex nature of the problem, detailing the FDA’s limited resources and the alternative means by which they were attempting to tackle the problem, and stating that withdrawal must be considered on a drug-by-drug basis. The FDA then proceeded to deny the requests based on the fact that no hearings had been held, based on the time and expense withdrawal would take, and based on the alternative strategy the FDA was pursuing. Under 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A), a court may set aside the FDA’s findings, conclusions of laws, or actions if they are “arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law.”

The FDA still prefers a voluntary phasing out of subtherapeutic use. The Agency appealed both rulings and motioned for a continuance to allow the industry time to comply. While the motion for a continuance was denied, both district court rulings were overruled in July 2014. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals found that 21 U.S.C. § 360b(e)(1) was ambiguous, but ultimately agreed with the FDA:

> The statute requires the FDA to withdraw approval of an animal drug only “after due notice and opportunity for hearing” has been afforded, and then only “if the Secretary finds” that the drug is not shown to be safe. 21

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190 Id.

191 Id. These alternative methods are far from satisfactory as they only involved issuing Guidelines. Although the FDA’s plan seemed to be a step in the right direct they refused to mandate compliance and the industry had failed to self-regulate. The court opinion provides, in pertinent part:

Specifically, the FDA cited Draft Guidance # 209, entitled “The Judicious Use of Medically Important Antimicrobial Drugs in Food–Producing Animals,” which recommends limiting the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals to judicious uses. Draft Guidance # 209 states that the FDA does not consider growth promotion or feed efficiency to be judicious uses. Draft Guidance # 209 also recommends that the use of medically-important antibiotics in food-producing animals should be limited to “uses that include veterinary oversight or consultation.” The FDA explained that “[b]ased on feedback [the FDA] has received [regarding Draft Guidance # 209], FDA believes that the animal pharmaceutical industry is generally responsive to the prospect of working cooperatively with the Agency to implement the principles recommended in [the Draft Guidance].” The FDA stated that it planned to phase-out over-the-counter use of medically-important antibiotics in animal feed and move to a veterinary feed directive (“VFD”) status for such drugs. The FDA also stated that it planned to work cooperatively with industry to achieve this transition. “FDA believes that the strategy set out in draft guidance # 209 is a pathway to achieving the same goals as those advocated in [the 1999 Petition] . . . .” Accordingly, the FDA refused to initiate withdrawal proceedings for the drugs included in the 1999 Petition.

Id. at 326

192 Id.


U.S.C. § 360B(e)(1). That language most naturally refers to a finding that is issued as a result of the hearing. That interpretation, moreover, avoids injecting a second, unexpressed “finding” into the sequence of events mentioned in the statute. 196

This holding means that withdrawal is only mandatory after manufacturers have had a hearing and, after hearing the evidence, the FDA finds that the drug is unsafe. Since the FDA did not issue a finding after conducting hearings, the Second Circuit granted summary judgment to the FDA. The court also found that the decision to ignore the citizen petitions was not arbitrary or capricious. 197 The ruling was not unanimous, with Chief Judge Katzmann issuing a dissent vehemently opposing the majority opinion. 198

C. Proposed Changes

The economic and social costs of antibiotic resistance must be combated through congressionally mandated standards, mandatory FDA withdrawal of subtherapeutic antibiotic use in food animals, and enforcement through the courts. The District Court’s opinion illustrates the need for a joint effort by the courts, the FDA, and Congress to tackle the problem of antibiotic resistance. 199 While the court found that the FDA had a legal obligation to follow the procedures dictated by Congress, the opinion also emphasized that policy making was not the proper sphere of the courts. 200 When interpreting an ambiguous statute, the court must interpret congressional intent, and for further guidance, defer to the Agency’s interpretation, as long as such interpretation is reasonable—essentially allowing the court to act as a legislative or executive body. 201 Even if the FDA had to fully comply with the court order, the ruling would have a limited effect—only approval for tetracyclines and penicillin would be withdrawn, allowing for subtherapeutic use of many other antibiotics. 202 In light of these overlapping roles, Congress must pass legislation with

196 Id.
197 Id.
198 Id.
200 Id. at 151. Courts, the district court noted, must provide appropriate oversight without telling the agency the best way to do their job:

when an agency is compelled by law to act within a certain time period, but the manner of its action is left to the agency’s discretion, a court can compel the agency to act, but has no power to specify what the action must be.” The Court further explained that the purpose of the limitations under § 706(1) “is to protect agencies from undue judicial interference with their lawful discretion, and to avoid judicial entanglement in abstract policy disagreements which courts lack both expertise and information to resolve.

Id. at 138 (quoting SUWA, 542 U.S. at 65–66 (2004) (internal citations omitted)).
201 Id. at 141.
202 Id. at 151.
clear and concise definitions that makes elimination of subtherapeutic use a clear priority. This will create a clear mandate to combat the growing threat of antibiotic resistance that the FDA will execute and the courts will enforce, if necessary. The FDA should have broad autonomy to fulfill the legislative mandate as they see fit, except when there is a broad failure of mission.

1. Make Certain Standards Legally Binding Through Legislation

To combat antibiotic resistance, legislation should be enacted to compliment the FDA’s efforts at eliminating harmful subtherapeutic antibiotic use. This legislation should include a three-tiered approach to battling antibiotic resistance in order to fulfill three goals: the immediate elimination of subtherapeutic use of medically important antibiotics, the complete phasing out of intensive confinement systems within ten years, and the eventual elimination of all subtherapeutic antibiotic use. The first phase of elimination entails defining and withdrawing approval of subtherapeutic use of all medically important antibiotics (those that are used to treat human illnesses). This phase should reinforce and expand upon the FDA’s withdrawal of approval for penicillin and tetracyclines. The second phase involves supplementing the Food Safety Modernization Act’s creation of state grants. Funds should be set aside for the FDA to administer to states, farms, or organizations that come up with creative or sustainable ways to eliminate all subtherapeutic use. Finally, the third phase requires the complete phasing out of intensive confinement systems and subtherapeutic antibiotic use within ten years of the Act’s passage.

Phase 1: Define key terms and eliminate subtherapeutic use of medically important antimicrobials.

The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2011 (PAMTA) should serve as a foundation for defining and withdrawing use of medically important subtherapeutic antibiotics.\footnote{See Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2011 [hereinafter PAMTA], H.R. 965, 112th Cong. (2011).} PAMTA was proposed to the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce as a supplement to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.\footnote{Id.} Although this Act had very little support within the Committee, the passage of parts of PAMTA could still serve as the first phase of a comprehensive legislative effort to combat antibiotic resistance. The first step in regulating harmful antibiotics must be to create uniform and legally enforceable definitions. These uniform definitions should be adopted by all U.S. regulatory agencies.

PAMTA procedures for withdrawing approval of all subtherapeutic use of medically important antimicrobials within two years should be enacted into law.\footnote{Barbara O’Brien, recognizing the many barriers to change and government inaction, suggests an outright ban on all subtherapeutic uses as the most practical way to combat the problem of antibiotic resistance and animal cruelty. While total elimination must be the ultimate goal, it is impractical as the first step due to the industry’s dependence on such drugs. This Note seeks to build on that approach and suggest a multifaceted approach as opposed to an outright ban. See O’Brien, supra note 94, at 412–14.} In 2009, eighty percent of all antibacterial drugs disseminated in the United States were
sold for use on food animals, and about eighty-four percent of farmers administered antimicrobials in food or water, many of which are closely related to human drugs. The sheer number of drugs used for this purpose, along with many industry studies, shows that subtherapeutic use of the same antimicrobials in both humans and food animals is the most serious cause of antibiotic resistance in humans. Switching from drugs used in humans to other antimicrobials should be mandated, especially as many alternative drugs that are not used in humans are readily available.

The FDA procedures for withdrawal of certain medically important antimicrobials are consistent with the PAMTA requirements. PAMTA requires the Secretary to withdraw approval of subtherapeutic use of medically important antimicrobials within two years, unless during that time it can be demonstrated that there is no harm to human health. Additionally, the Act forbids approval of any new medically important drugs for growth purposes unless there is reasonable certainty that there would not be harm to human health. Passing legislation that creates legally binding definitions and mandates procedures for withdrawing

PAMTA, supra note 203, at § 2 (finding that, in 2009, “13.1 million kilograms of antibacterial drugs were sold for use on food animals in the United States . . . [only] 3.3 million kilograms of antibacterial drugs were used for human health in 2009.”); see also Levy, supra note 13 at 140.  

See Levy Testimony, supra note 61.  

PAMTA, supra note 203, at 2–9. Other studies have provided more direct evidence of the link between subtherapeutic use in animals and human antibiotic-resistant infections, and of meat products contaminated with antibiotic-resistant bacteria. See Levy Testimony, supra note 61 (citing several studies that confirm the impact food animals have on antibiotic resistance including one study that found antibiotics present in 48% of streams tested nationwide, half of which were downstream from agricultural operations).  

Much of the beef industry has already self-regulated and switched to non-human antimicrobials upon the recommendation by the American Cattleman’s Association. Additionally, much of Europe has already mandated this switch. These swift and easy transitions prove that the entire industry could switch if required to do so.  

PAMTA specifies:

[The] the Secretary shall withdraw the approval of a nontherapeutic use in food producing animals described in paragraph (1) on the date that is 2 years after the date of enactment of this subsection unless- (A) before the date . . . the Secretary makes a final written determination that the holder of the approved application has demonstrated that there is a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health due to the development of antimicrobial resistance that is attributable in whole or in part to the non-therapeutic use of the drug . . .

See PAMTA, supra note 203, § 4(q)(2).  

Once legislation deems subtherapeutic use unsafe, the new policy could be instituted under the FDA’s current new drug approval process. 21 U.S.C.A. § 360(b) provides that new animal drugs shall be deemed unsafe, and thus denied approval, unless they conform to current laws and are shown to be safe for the public. This provision applies both to drugs administered directly to the animals, or indirectly through feed. PAMTA, supra note 203, at § 4; 21. U.S.C.A. § 360(b) (West 2014) (delineating annual registration and approval requirements for drugs administered directly to animals, or indirectly through feed).
approval of subtherapeutic usage within two years of the Act’s passage is the first and most important step in fighting antibiotic resistance. Congress should adopt a statute substantially similar to the following model:

DEFINITIONS - SECTION 201 OF THE FEDERAL FOOD, DRUG, AND COSMETIC ACT (21 U.S.C. 321) IS AMENDED BY ADDING AT THE END THE FOLLOWING:

1. ANTIMICROBIAL ANIMAL DRUG—The term “antimicrobial animal drug” means: A substance that is composed wholly or partly of any drug or derivative of a drug that is used in or intended for use in food-producing animals.

2. MEDICALLY IMPORTANT ANTIMICROBIAL ANIMAL DRUG—The term “medically important antimicrobial animal drug” means: an antimicrobial animal drug that is used in humans or intended for use in humans to treat or prevent disease or infections caused by microorganisms.

3. SUBTHERAPEUTIC USE—The term “subtherapeutic use” means: The use of an antimicrobial in a food animal, in the absence of any clinical sign of disease or disease exposure in the animal for growth promotion, feed efficiency, weight gain, routine disease prevention or other routine purpose.

4. INTENSIVE CONFINEMENT—The term “intensive confinement” means: any structure that would substantially restrict the natural movement and normal behaviors of an animal.

ELIMINATION OF DRUGS IMPORTANT FOR HUMAN HEALTH

1. APPLICABILITY—This subsection applies to the subtherapeutic use in a food-animal of a medically important antimicrobial animal drug.

2. WITHDRAWAL—The Secretary shall withdraw the approval of a subtherapeutic use in food-animal described in paragraph (1) 2 years after the date of enactment of this subsection.

3. APPROVALS—If an application for a drug that is a medically important antimicrobial animal drug is submitted to the Secretary under section 505(b), the Secretary shall rescind each approval of a nontherapeutic use in a food animal of the drug as of the date that is 2 years after the date on which the application is submitted to the Secretary. 212

These definitions are a combination of language from PAMTA and from the recommendation of the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal production. PAMTA provides, in relevant part:

(ss) CRITICAL ANTIMICROBIAL ANIMAL DRUG.— The term “critical antimicrobial animal drug” means a drug that—
(1) is intended for use in food-producing animals; and
(2) is composed wholly or partly of—
(A) any kind of penicillin, tetracycline, macrolide, lincosamide, streptogramin, aminoglycoside, or sulfonamide; or
(B) any other drug or derivative of a drug that is used in humans or intended for use in humans to treat or prevent disease or infection caused by microorganisms.

(tt) NONTHERAPEUTIC USE.— the term ‘nontherapeutic use’, with respect to a critical antimicrobial animal drug, means any use of the drug as a feed or water additive for an animal in the absence of any clinical sign of disease in the animal for growth.
Phase 2: Create additional state grants to help farmers transition into total elimination of subtherapeutic antibiotic use.

While withdrawing approval for the use of medically important antimicrobials is an important first step, total elimination of subtherapeutic use must be the end goal to fully eliminate the problem of antibiotic resistance. However, as our modern meat industry is built around the low cost and high volume of meat that factory farms can produce, legislation must be careful to consider the effects on the meat industry, as a whole, of eliminating intensive confinement systems. These systems must be phased out gradually so the industry has time to adjust.

In order to make the process easier, the new legislation should immediately supplement the Food Safety Modernization Act’s creation of state grants. The FDA should receive grants to distribute to state governments, farms, or other entities that attempt to institute creative and sustainable models that eliminate intensive confinement systems or subtherapeutic antibiotic use. These subsidies provide an incentive for farmers to be innovative and start to move towards more sustainable practices.

Phase 3: Eliminate intensive confinement systems factory farms and ban all subtherapeutic antibiotic usage.

The eventual elimination of all intensive confinement systems must be legally mandated to slow the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The new legislation should require the FDA to set the goal of eliminating all intensive confinement systems, those which restrict the natural movement and normal behaviors of animals within ten years of the act’s passage. Although eliminating the use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion is a key first step, it

Promotion, feed efficiency, weight gain, routine disease prevention, or other routine purpose.

PAMTA, supra note 203, § 4 (ss–tt). The Pew Commission suggests similar, but not identical, definitions in its report:

a. The Commission defines as nontherapeutic any use of antimicrobials in food animals in the absence of microbial disease or known (documented) microbial disease exposure; thus, any use of the drug as an additive for growth promotion, feed efficiency, weight gain, routine disease prevention in the absence of documented exposure, or other routine purpose is considered nontherapeutic.

b. The Commission defines as therapeutic the use of antimicrobials in food animals with diagnosed microbial disease.

Pew Comm’n, supra note 78, at 63. I would not recommend listing specific types of drugs—as PAMTA does—because a basic rule of statutory interpretation indicates that listing some drugs seems to exclude other drugs; instead, the act can provide a dynamic definition that the courts can then interpret. See supra Section III(C)(3).

213 See supra Part II.

214 See Pew Comm’n, supra note 78, at 33.
is not alone sufficient to combat the threat of antibiotic resistance. When bacteria select, they can build up resistance to multiple antibiotics\textsuperscript{215} and, therefore, may still pose a threat in the future. Thus, a comprehensive plan must address the root cause of what makes subtherapeutic use necessary on the factory farm: close confinement. If animals were not kept in such close quarters, disease would not have the potential to quickly spread throughout the entire population.\textsuperscript{216} Additionally, smaller-scale farms could keep better records of the health of each individual animal and respond to outbreaks more efficiently.\textsuperscript{217} Once intensive confinement systems are eliminated, the subtherapeutic use of all antibiotics should be banned as well. The following statutory language should be added to the end of the proposed regulation in Part C(1)(a) of this Note:

C. ELIMINATION OF INTENSIVE CONFINEMENT SYSTEMS
1. APPLICABILITY—This subsection applies to the regulation of the intensive confinement of food-animals.
2. WITHDRAWAL—All intensive confinement systems described in paragraph (1) shall be eliminated within 10 years after the date of the enactment of this subsection.

D. ELIMINATION OF SUBTHERAPEUTIC USE IN FOOD-ANIMALS.
1. APPLICABILITY—This subsection applies to the subtherapeutic use in a food-animals of an antimicrobial animal drug.
2. WITHDRAWAL—The Secretary shall withdraw the approval of a subtherapeutic use in food-animals described in paragraph (1) 10 years after the date of enactment of this subsection.
3. APPROVALS—If an application for a drug that is an antimicrobial animal drug is submitted to the Secretary under section 505(b), the Secretary shall rescind each approval of a nontherapeutic use in a food animal of the drug, as of the date that is 2 years after the date on which the application was submitted to the Secretary.

Outlawing intensive confinement systems will likely mean a decrease in efficiency, at least in the short term. Accordingly, production and prices would rise if intensive confinement systems were phased out (with the possible exception of beef which is less reliant on intensive confinement). This increase in prices is acceptable for several reasons. First, most Americans already eat more meat than ever before, and far more than the recommended daily amount.\textsuperscript{218} Even if higher prices meant less meat for consumers, health could be further enhanced by a reduction in meat eating.\textsuperscript{219} Moreover, as previously mentioned, the cost of antibiotic-resistant infections is massive. The rise in meat prices would be comparatively smaller and more manageable as the cost would be spread across all consumers.\textsuperscript{220}

\textsuperscript{215} See Levy Testimony, supra note 61; Pew Comm’N, supra note 78, at 16.
\textsuperscript{216} Pew Comm’N, supra note 78, at 13.
\textsuperscript{217} Id. at 64.
\textsuperscript{218} See Bittman, supra note 74.
\textsuperscript{219} See Bittman, supra note 74.
\textsuperscript{220} See supra Part II(C)(1).
individuals already pay a four to five dollar premium price for meat that is “free range,” “hormone free,” or “organic.”

Over time, most individuals would find the additional cost manageable; low income households could receive assistance through government assistant programs which are already in place to combat hunger and malnutrition.

In addition, wealth would likely increase in rural areas which have been driven into poverty largely by the rise of the factory farming system. Citizens of rural areas generally have lower incomes due to less educational attainment, fewer opportunities, and less diversity. This problem is amplified by factory farms, which drive small family-owned farms out of business. Rural communities benefit from locally owned and controlled farms as, in addition to hiring locals to work on the farm, they tend to buy other services and supplies locally. This “multiplier effect” keeps approximately seven dollars by dollars earned on local farms in the community. Many large factory farms are vertically integrated with large suppliers, making their multiplier substantially lower. Additionally, “reduced civic participation rates, higher levels of stress, and other less tangible impacts have all been associated with high concentrations of industrial farm production.” Thus, although breaking up intensive confinement systems could increase the cost of meat, the economies of many rural areas would greatly benefit from this policy—as would the health of Americans, thereby offsetting some of the cost.

2. Develop Clear FDA Definitions and Guidelines

The FDA should consult with industry experts, manufacturers, and veterinarians to convert Guidance #152 and Guidance #209 into binding minimum standards. The FDA must follow the withdrawal procedures and timetables dictated by Congress and can use industry Guidelines to fill in the instructional gaps in legislation. While the Guidance letters are an excellent way to provide manufacturers with pertinent information, they must have some legal backing to ensure compliance. The Guidelines should be converted from non-binding recommendations to binding industry standards. In addition to the immediate review of existing approvals, which must be withdrawn, the FDA should create a permanent schedule for reviewing existing approvals. In this way, the FDA could translate the congressional mandate for change into workable minimum standards based on a reasonable timetable.

Total compliance must be phased in, and the FDA will likely not choose to prosecute all firms who fail to meet these guidelines during the first few years. Firms


223 PEW COMM’N, supra note 78 at 41.

224 Id. at 41.

225 Id.

226 Id.

227 Id. at 59.

228 Id; see also GUIDANCE #209, supra note 7.
should self-report how they met, or strived to meet, the good manufacturing practices guidelines, and report any problems they may have. If firms have not met these guidelines, they should have to submit a comprehensive plan on how to meet them in the future. Such a system allows the FDA to work with the industry towards voluntary compliance, as the FDA prefers, while also establishing clear goals and guidelines.

3. The Role of the Courts

While the courts should generally defer to the FDA’s policy choices, they are still an important check on the Agency’s power and play a key role in enforcing drug regulations. The courts must walk a fine line between hindering the FDA’s policymaking ability and giving the Agency free reign to do what it wishes. On the one hand, discretion allows the FDA to predict the outcome of rulemaking and extend its power based on assurance of judicial support. However, as the court articulated in American College of Neuropsychopharmacology v. Mathews, “[b]ureaucratic power in any agency seems to grow to fill whatever bounds are permitted it by Congress and the courts, and the courts do rein in the exuberant jurisdiction-extending agencies, when they determine that zeal has exceeded legal authority.” In the case of antibiotic resistance, the courts have recognized a serious threat to public health and have ordered the FDA to act accordingly. The courts should continue to recognize the rights of citizens to petition the FDA to fulfill their regulatory responsibilities when such requests are backed by firm scientific foundations, but continue to filter out frivolous lawsuits.

If the proposed legislation is passed, the courts will need to ensure that the FDA follows the law. Although the FDA can use their discretion in withdrawing use, they must determine which antibiotics are subject to removal. If a company disputes the legality of their antibiotic use, the court would have to interpret and apply the new law. The definition of “subtherapeutic” is based on whether or not the purpose of the drug use is to treat illness or promote growth, forcing the courts to look at key indicators to determine whether or not drug was intended for subtherapeutic use. However, the increase in legislation should not be substantial as many farmers may be hesitant to sue the FDA for fear of reprisals in their licensing actions, and the FDA rarely brings cases they are not sure they can win. Therefore, the courts should be sure to enforce the new legislation while being careful to grant the FDA sufficient discretion.

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232 Based on the definitions in the new legislation as well as their own initiated proceedings. For instance, FDA Guidance #152 defines an antibiotic as potentially important in human medicine if FDA issues an Investigational New Drug determination or receives a New Drug Application for the compound. See GUIDANCE #152, supra note 162.
IV. Conclusion

The economic and social costs of antibiotic resistance must be combated through the joint efforts of Congress, executive agencies, and the courts using congressionally mandated standards, FDA approval withdrawal procedures, and the court system. Now, more than ever, scientists and government officials alike are recognizing the serious economic, social, and health costs created by antibiotic-resistant bacteria.\footnote{233 See GUIDANCE #209, supra note 7.} Antibiotic overuse has led to the creation of “superbugs” that are more difficult and costly to treat, and an increase in the prevalence of allergies, asthma, and autoimmune diseases.\footnote{234 See infra Part II(B).} Current food and drug legislation does nothing to eliminate this threat, and the FDA has refused to provide clear, consistent, and binding guidelines to address the problem. A comprehensive, joint effort must be made by Congress, the FDA, other regulatory agencies, and the courts to eliminate the pervasive problem. The legislature must create legally binding standards that are easily followed by administrative agencies and enforced by the courts. At the same time, it must preserve the FDA’s discretion to implement such changes based on their expertise. Congress must create a uniform definition of subtherapeutic antibiotic usage, immediately mandate the withdrawal of approval of medically important antibiotics for subtherapeutic use, and eliminate all subtherapeutic use in the future. Such legislation will inevitably affect the price and quantity of meat produced. Therefore, these changes must be enacted in phases and special care should be taken to help ease the transition for farmers. While the public may be asked to pick up some of the cost increase, the amount saved in healthcare costs will lead to a net savings for the United States as a whole.