Most animal antibiotics used for treating, preventing disease, finds survey

The Animal Health Institute recently announced the results of a survey in antibiotic use in animals in the United States that indicates that the vast majority of antibiotics are used to treat and prevent disease. The survey is based on data from 1998 provided to AHI by its members.

“Antibiotics are vitally important to veterinarians, pet owners and livestock producers who rely on these medicines to protect pets and farm animals from disease,” said AHI President and CEO Alexander S. Mathews. “The Animal Health Institute is hopeful that this data will provide for greater public understanding of the importance of antibiotics in preventing and controlling disease.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that more than 50 million pounds of antibiotics are produced in the United States each year. According to the AHI survey, 17.8 million pounds — 36 percent — are used in animals. Of the total used in animals, 14.7 million pounds — 83 percent — are used for prevention and treatment of disease. Of all antibiotic uses, only 3.1 million pounds — 6.1 percent — are used for growth promotion, according to the survey.

Antibiotics may be approved for use in both companion and farm animals. There are more than 115 million cats and dogs, and more than 7 million sheep, 6.9 million horses, 7.5 billion chickens, 292 million turkeys, 109 million cattle, and 92 million pigs in the United States.

“In addition to protecting the health of America’s pets, antibiotics help farmers maintain healthier animals, which helps make America’s food supply the world’s safest” added Mathews.

The Food and Drug Administration regulates all antibiotics for animals. The approval process is stringent and scientific, requiring that all antibiotics be proven safe for both animals and humans.

USDA allows the transit of pork and pork products from six Mexican states

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has changed its import regulations to allow fresh, chilled or frozen pork and pork products from the Mexican states of Baja California Sur, Campeche, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Quintana Roo, and Sinaloa to transit the United States, under certain conditions, for export to another country.

This provision applies only to pork and pork products that transit the United States via land border ports.

“There have been no outbreaks of classical swine fever in any of these areas since 1993,” said Alfonso Torres, deputy administrator for veterinary services with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, a part of USDA’s marketing and regulatory programs mission area. “We are confident fresh pork and pork products can transit the United States under seal with minimal risk of introducing classical swine fever.”

Before taking this final action, APHIS reviewed information provided by Mexican representatives knowledgeable in disease prevention, epidemiology, and diagnostic methods.

Fresh pork from four other Mexican states: Baja California, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Yucatan, has already been cleared to transit the United States via land border ports for export to other countries.