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December 28, 2011

Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U. S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) was very concerned about your recent comments made while discussing the Administration's food safety efforts as they related to the use of antibiotics in food animals. We were pleased to learn that your comments do not signify a change in USDA policy on this critical issue.

The AVMA strongly supports the judicious use of antibiotics in food producing animals. This includes the administration of antibiotics for treatment, control, and prevention of animal diseases to promote food safety as well as assure the health and well-being of food producing animals.

We are currently collaborating with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in developing training modules for the new veterinary accreditation program, including one specifically addressing the judicious use of antimicrobials in food animals. APHIS welcomes our input on this and other topics relevant to veterinary medicine. In addition, we continue to work with the Food and Drug Administration to increase veterinary medical oversight of antimicrobial use in animals to ensure appropriate availability of those drugs to protect both public health and animal health.

To restrict certain uses of antibiotics without careful consideration of the risks and benefits to both humans and animals removes a very valuable tool in the veterinarian's medical bag for preventing and minimizing animal disease and suffering while also ensuring a safe and wholesome food supply.

As the organization that represents the veterinary medical profession in the United States, the AVMA welcomes the opportunity to assist you and your office on this and all veterinary issues. Please do not hesitate to call on us when we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

René Carlson
President
American Veterinary Medical Association