June 7, 2010

US Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC, 20201

Re: Trans-Atlantic Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TATFAR) Listening Session

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing on behalf of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), established in 1863 and the largest veterinary medical association in the world. As a not-for-profit association established to advance the science and art of veterinary medicine, AVMA is the recognized national voice for the veterinary profession. The association’s more than 80,000 members represent approximately 83% of U.S. veterinarians, all of whom are involved in a myriad of areas of veterinary medical practice including private, corporate, academic, industrial, governmental, military, and public health services.

The American Veterinary Medical Association appreciates this opportunity to provide feedback on the mandate of the Trans-Atlantic Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance. The Association applauds the Task Force’s mandate to focus on the issue of appropriate uses of antimicrobial drugs in the medical and veterinary communities. The AVMA, Food and Drug Administration, and Codex Alimentarius Commission include treatment, prevention, and control of disease in their definition of therapeutic and appropriate use of antimicrobials. We urge the Task Force to seek stakeholder input and promote collaboration between human and animal health professionals. Furthermore, the AVMA asserts that as the only profession that routinely operates at the interface between human and animal health, veterinarians are the appropriate medical professionals to determine appropriate antimicrobial treatment in animals.

The Association recognizes that health care associated and community associated resistant infections are significant concerns in the human health community. As veterinarians, trained in population medicine, we also agree that prevention of the development and transmission of infectious diseases including resistant infections are paramount to the practice of medicine. We commend the Task Force mandate and seek ways to work collaboratively. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to have an open dialogue and exchange of knowledge with our colleagues in the EU human and veterinary medical communities.

The Association has historically and continues to be a strong advocate for the development of new antimicrobials. The AVMA was a key stakeholder in the development of the Public Health Action Plan to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance,
helping to ensure that the plan provided a blueprint detailing coordinated federal actions that are critically needed if we are to mitigate the threat of antimicrobial resistance that included identification of incentives for product development as a priority action item. Since the development of the Action Plan, the AVMA has consistently been supportive of the plan and advocated for funding to fully implement the plan.

Despite the strong support from both the human and veterinary medical communities for new antimicrobial drugs, few have been developed for humans and even fewer for veterinary medicine.

We are optimistic that the mandate outlined for the Task Force will succeed in enhanced cooperation among the medical professions as well as between the US and the EU. The Association thanks the Department of Health and Human Services for hosting the Stakeholder Listening Session and we welcome the opportunity to be a resource for the Task Force.

For more information, please contact Dr. Christine Hoang, at choang@avma.org or 800-248-2862 ext. 6742.

Sincerely,

W. Ron DeHaven, DVM, MBA
Chief Executive Officer, AVMA