

# The Truth About:

## MEAT AND ANTIBIOTICS

Just like people, animals sometimes get infections that need to be treated with antibiotics.

- Animals raised for food can become sick with respiratory, gastrointestinal, reproductive, and other bacterial infections.
- Veterinarians are responsible for prescribing antibiotics if necessary, and for choosing them appropriately.
- As in health care, antibiotic stewardship is important on the farm, and farmers work with veterinarians to meet this goal.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) oversees meat testing.

- Science-based antibiotic monitoring and testing programs established by USDA FSIS are in place to ensure meat is safe from harmful levels of antibiotics.
- Each testing program calls for samples to be routinely tested before meat is processed for human consumption.
- Products found to contain antibiotics are discarded.
- Meat imported into the U.S. is held to the same testing requirements and safety standards as U.S.-raised meat.
- Testing protocols are routinely reviewed to ensure protocols are able to detect even trace levels of antibiotics in meat prior to release for human consumption.

It is against the law to sell meat containing antibiotics.

- Less than 0.5% of all meat samples tested in 2018 contained detectable antibiotics (U.S. Residue Program). Farmers, processors, and regulatory agencies work together to get this number to zero.
- When an animal is treated with antibiotics, farmers follow federal guidelines defining how long they must withhold that animal's meat or milk from consumption.
- If there is any question about how long to wait before processing, farmers work with veterinarians to determine a safe period to hold the animal.



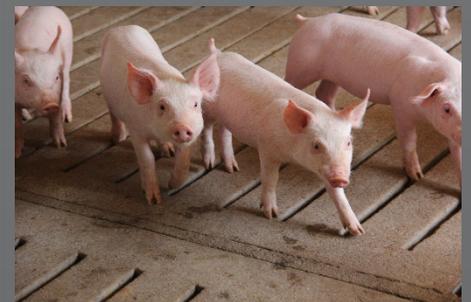
WORKING TOGETHER TO  
**PROTECT HEALTH &  
PRESERVE ANTIBIOTICS**

### Did you know?

As of January 1, 2017, Federal guidelines require a veterinarian to write the prescription or order when antibiotics important to human health will be used in feed or water of livestock and poultry.

### Why is this important?

As in health care, professionals in veterinary medicine must identify where antibiotic use practices can be improved. Eliminating unnecessary antibiotic use is an important part of antibiotic stewardship.



### Minnesota One Health Antibiotic Stewardship Collaborative

Minnesotans from animal, human, and environmental health are working together to be smart about antibiotic use and preventing antibiotic resistance!

[www.health.state.mn.us/onehealthabx](http://www.health.state.mn.us/onehealthabx)



## “Antibiotic-free” is a misleading term.

- All meat legally sold in the U.S. arrives at the store after inspection by the USDA FSIS for safety and wholesomeness.
- It is against the law for anyone to sell any meat containing unsafe levels of antibiotics.
- Meat with unsafe levels of antibiotics is not approved for human consumption and is discarded.

## Violations for selling meat with antibiotics are rare, but the penalties are steep.

- Selling meat with antibiotics has costly consequences.
- Meat tested positive for antibiotic residue is discarded.
- If a farmer has more than one antibiotic residue violation in a 12 month period, the farmer’s name is published on a public “Violator List,” available on the Federal FSIS website.
- Processing facilities avoid purchasing animals from farmers with multiple published violations.

## The meat and poultry industries work to improve animal health and antibiotic stewardship.

- Farmers strive to produce healthy, safe meat products for the public, do right by the animals that they raise, and listen to the concerns of their consumers.
- Commodity groups and animal health organizations provide antimicrobial stewardship education to producers, farm workers, and veterinarians on improvement of animal health and prevention of infections, appropriate antibiotic use and treatment procedures, and avoidance of antibiotics in food products.
- Many meat processing companies will only buy animals from farms that complete continuous antibiotic education programs.
- Talk to your local farmers about how they maintain and improve animal health while practicing antibiotic stewardship.
- Antibiotic stewardship will help us maintain our shared resource of antibiotics for human and animal health.

### References

U.S. National Residue Program 2018 Annual Report. Available at:  
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/d6baddf7-0352-4a0e-a86d-32ba2d4613ba/2018-red-book.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

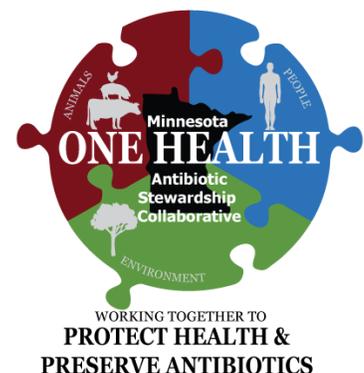
Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Residue Prevention. Available at:  
<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/residue-prevention>



Connect with farmers and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to learn more!

- Minnesota Beef Council:  
<https://mnbeef.org>
- Minnesota Pork Board:  
<https://www.mnpork.com>
- Minnesota Turkey:  
<https://minnesotaturkey.com>
- MDA Antibiotic Stewardship:  
<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/antibiotic-stewardship>

This fact sheet was developed with contributions by Minnesota Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health, and food animal commodity groups participating in the Minnesota One Health Antibiotic Stewardship Collaborative.



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