

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter

Ranking Member, House Committee on Rules
Representing New York's 28th District

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MEDIA CONTACT
Victoria Dillon (202) 225-2888

Slaughter Warns of Emerging Public Health Crisis After Study Finds US Meat and Poultry Widely Contaminated

1 in 4 samples contain antibiotic-resistant bacteria, study shows

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), the only microbiologist in Congress, reiterated her call to limit the overuse of antibiotics in animals today following new evidence that more than a quarter of all U.S. meat and poultry contain bacteria resistant to at least three classes of antibiotics.

The study, conducted by the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) and published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases* today, found 47 percent of meat and poultry samples contained *Staphylococcus aureus*, a bacteria linked with serious health implications. Of greater concern, the study found 52 percent of contaminated sources contained bacteria resistant to at least three classes of antibiotics.

“These are staggering figures and even more evidence that we must end the rampant overuse of antibiotics in agriculture,” said Slaughter. “What we are witnessing is a looming public health crisis that is moving from farms to grocery stores to dinner tables around the country. Unless we act now, we will unwittingly be permitting animals to serve as incubators for resistant bacteria.”

Over the past several years, the widespread practice of using antibiotics to promote livestock growth and compensate for unsanitary, crowded conditions has led to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria and other microscopic life, rendering many of our most powerful drugs ineffective. These breeding grounds for drug-resistant bacteria then move from animals to humans, as today's report confirms.

The study comes on the heels of An April 8 article in the [Wall Street Journal](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704013604576248182661678522.html?KEYWORDS=antibiotics) (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704013604576248182661678522.html?KEYWORDS=antibiotics>) highlighting the spread of such antibiotic resistant superbugs such as the NDM-1 and the alarm it is causing in the international health community. The article notes, “The [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2011/whd_20110406/en/index.html) (http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2011/whd_20110406/en/index.html)

issued a plea [April 7th] for collective action to fight emerging superbugs like NDM-1, warning that the threat is spreading fast.”

Since 2007, Slaughter has authored legislation titled The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), designed to ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human disease. Slaughter reintroduced PAMTA last month as H.R. 965.

“When we go to the grocery store to pick up dinner, we should be able to buy our food without worrying that eating it will expose our family to potentially deadly bacteria that will no longer respond to our medical treatments,” said Slaughter. “I will continue pushing for legislation to reduce the use of antibacterial drugs on healthy animals. I hope members of both parties will join me in this effort because protecting our health is not a partisan issue.”

She is also continuing ongoing work with the Obama Administration to take all steps possible to end the overuse of antibiotics, and preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human disease.

In February, Slaughter confirmed with the US Food and Drug Administration that 80 percent of all antibacterial drugs used in the United States are used on animals rather than humans.

At the time Slaughter said, “4 out of 5 antibiotics sold in this country were for use on animals, many of whom are not even sick, and that is dangerous to all of us. We know that the widespread use of antibiotics on healthy animals is contributing to the growth of bacteria resistance to the drugs we use to treat humans.”

For more on her work to protect public health, [click here](http://www.louise.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=78&Itemid=129).
(http://www.louise.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=78&Itemid=129)

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United States House of Representatives
2469 Rayburn House Office Building • Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3615 phone • (202) 225-7822 fax • www.louise.house.gov