Rep. Louise M. Slaughter

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

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Slaughter Says FDA Rule Addresses Just the Tip of the Iceberg

Rochester, NY – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and the only microbiologist in Congress, today offered tepid support to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after it belatedly announced a rule to prohibit the extra-label use of an important class of antibiotics critical for the treatment of humans in food-animal production.

The decision, which Slaughter has continuously pushed for, most recently in July 2011 (http://www.louise.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2619:slaughter-responds-to-fda-decision-regarding-antibiotic-use-in-livestock&catid=95:2011-press-releases&Itemid=55), would prohibit the use of cephalosporin antibiotics for purposes other than those specified on the label, known as extra-label, uses. However, the FDA's action comes over three years after the FDA originally determined that extra-label use in food producing animals poses a risk to public health.

"This is a modest first step by the FDA," said Slaughter, "but we're really just looking at the tip of the iceberg. We don't have time for the FDA to ploddingly take half-measures. We are staring at a massive public health threat in the rise of antibiotic-resistant superbugs. We need to start acting with the swiftness and decisiveness this problem deserves."

In July 2008, the FDA announced it would implement a rule prohibiting the extra-label use of cephalosporins, noting it was "concerned that the extra-label use of cephalosporins in food-producing animals is likely to lead to the emergence of cephalosporin-resistant strains of foodborne bacterial pathogens."

Despite this, the decision to act was delayed by the FDA. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of Americans have become ill from cephalosporin-resistant infections as increasing numbers of

pathogens have become resistant to cephalosporins. In 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that almost three percent of *Salmonella* tested was cephalosporin-resistant.

"Do the math," said Slaughter. "With over one million *Salmonella* cases in the US each year, at least 30,000 Americans will contract cephalosporin-resistant bacteria every year. I'm glad the FDA is finally acting but how many Americans have needlessly been sickened in the meantime?"

Cephalosporins are an important class of drug in human medicine, used to treat *Salmonella* and *Shigella* in children and a variety of other infections including *E. Coli* and *Staph*.

Since 2007, Congresswoman Slaughter has been the author of 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. The legislation would prevent the overuse of seven classes of antibiotics, including cephalosporins.

More information on PAMTA, including a list of the more than 300 organizations who have endorsed Slaughter's legislation is available here. (http://www.louise.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1315&Itemid=138)

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