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From: Chuck Fry, President, Maryland Farm Bureau

Don't Duplicate Antibiotic Regulations in Maryland

Maryland Farm Bureau and Maryland's livestock producers recognize the serious problem of antibiotic resistance due to over-prescription. Our farmers have been voluntarily cooperating with veterinarians and public policy makers in developing policies and procedures to address the use of antibiotics in livestock production.

Two Food and Drug Administration regulations addressing this problem took effect on January 1, 2017. One rule removes the usage of antibiotics for animal growth-promotion purposes. The other regulation requires veterinary oversight of drugs designated as medically important that are used to treat sick animals. Maryland's livestock producers are moving forward cooperatively to address this serious health care challenge.

The transference vectors in livestock production have been addressed by regulations through the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Maryland Department of the Environment. Our livestock producers comply with all requirements of their concentrated animal feeding operation permits, including sanitation and the proper management of wastewater and manure disposal.

The "Keep Antibiotics Effective Act of 2017" is proposed legislation intended to make Maryland law more restrictive than the new FDA regulations. Maryland Farm Bureau opposes these bills (HB 602 and SB 422) as they would create several direct conflicts with the FDA regulations. Furthermore, the FDA regulations have only been in effect for six weeks, which is insufficient time to expect measurable results that would warrant the development of additional regulations.

This Act creates a conflict with the definition of disease prevention and will restrict a livestock producer from using common disease prevention methods to administer proper animal husbandry and maintain a healthy herd. Because the federal regulation eliminates over-the-counter antibiotic use, these bills are not necessary and if enacted would actually cause more livestock sickness outbreaks. These additional outbreaks would also increase antibiotic resistance as more sick animals would have to be treated thus leading to more opportunities of resistant bacteria to enter the food chain.