



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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## **Antibiotic Use in Livestock and Poultry Already Taken Care of**

By Chuck Fry, Maryland Farm Bureau president

Farmers and medical professionals across the spectrum have been concerned about the use of antibiotics in poultry and livestock. To address these concerns, a new set of regulations published by the Food and Drug Administration will go into full effect on January 1, 2017, preventing any overuse or misuse of antibiotics in the farm sector.

These new regulations will remove “over-the-counter” purchases and require a Veterinarian Feed Directive (VFD) for the use of medically important antibiotics in livestock and poultry. The regulations will also eliminate the ability of producers to use antibiotics for growth promotion.

A forum will be held in Charles County soon that may omit the significant steps that have already been taken to address antibiotic use in livestock and poultry. Organizers may suggest that legislation is needed in Annapolis.

In fact, during the 2016 Maryland General Assembly session, legislation was defeated that would have further ratcheted down antibiotic use by farmers. These bills would have prevented the use of antibiotics for disease prevention. Both bodies agreed to allow the federal regulations to take effect and provide a level playing field for farmers in Maryland who compete with farmers across the country.

Maryland Farm Bureau has been working with livestock and poultry producers around the state for over two years to help prepare for the changes that will occur nationwide on January 1. We have worked closely with the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the State Veterinarian to create a protocol for farmers, veterinarians and feed stores to implement the new federal regulations.

We firmly believe that it would be a mistake to enact policies to restrict a livestock producer from using common disease prevention methods to administer proper animal husbandry and maintain a healthy herd. Because the federal regulation will eliminate over-the-counter antibiotic use, additional changes are not necessary.

If adopted, further restrictions would likely lead to outbreaks of livestock sickness and increased antibiotic resistance, as more sick animals would have to be treated, leading to more opportunities for resistant bacteria to be created. Veterinarian prescribed disease prevention is humane for the animals and it ensures less antibiotic use overall.