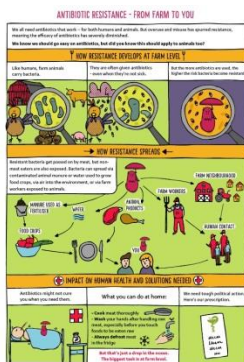


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## BEUC campaign to cut antibiotics among farm animals

Antimicrobial resistance kills 25,000 Europeans every year in Europe<sup>1</sup>. The use of antibiotics should not be a first reflex for humans when ill<sup>2</sup>, but this needs to apply to farm animals also.

Today on [European Antibiotic Awareness Day](#), BEUC kicked off a [campaign](#) urging the EU institutions to restrict antibiotic use among livestock so as to reduce resistance.



Click to see how resistance spreads from farm to you and what you can do about it.

Current EU rules on such usage are inadequate. While antibiotic use for growth promotion was banned in the EU in 2006, animals are still given antibiotics to prevent sickness although the whole herd is healthy.

The new legislative proposals<sup>3</sup> under discussion in the European Parliament should clearly prohibit antibiotic use on healthy animals. Member States are free to set their own rules, but we need EU-wide rules.

BEUC's campaign stems from [tests by its member organisations](#)<sup>4</sup> on raw meat sold in 9 European countries.

In Italy, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany, **72%-98% of poultry samples were contaminated with antibiotic resistant bacteria.**

Lower rates must not be necessarily overlooked – meat samples tested in France contained 'superbugs', i.e. bacteria resistant to several antibiotics.

Resistant bacteria withstand antibiotics meaning infections – even routine ones – will be more difficult to cure. Consequently, interventions such as surgery or chemotherapy which rely on antibiotic efficacy have already become more hazardous.

The more antibiotics used, the higher the risk bacteria become resistant. Misuse and overuse on farm animals spurs resistance which can spread to humans in several ways, including food.

### Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"We all need antibiotics which work when we are sick or undergoing surgery. So it is crucial to keep our antibiotics efficient if we don't want finger cuts<sup>5</sup> or ear infections to become highly risky again.

"Best practice is to reduce the use of antibiotics on animals which will end up on our plates. For instance, Denmark slashed antimicrobial use in poultry by 90% in 13 years<sup>6</sup>.

"We must administer antibiotics to sick animals only and exclude healthy ones. Moreover, those antibiotics which we crucially need to treat humans must not be given to animals if we are to curb resistance.

"Apart from going easy on antibiotics and following a few tips at home – such as cooking meat thoroughly – there's little more we can do as consumers. So there's a real need for [the European Commission to bolster its plans](#) which patently lack ambition as they stand.

"It is not too late to defuse the resistance time bomb, but tough remedies are needed, and quickly."

ENDS

More info on BEUC's ['Can we trust our meat?' campaign](#) and [antibiotic resistance in livestock](#)

<sup>1</sup> ['The bacterial challenge: time to react'](#), p.vi, ECDC/EMA Joint technical report, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> ['Are antibiotics still "automatic" in France?'](#), Bulletin of the WHO, Vol.89, January 2011.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission proposals on [veterinary medicines](#) and [medicated feed](#), released on September 10, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> See annex to the BEUC position paper ['Antibiotics use in livestock - Time to act'](#). Tests are from Altroconsumo (Italy), DECO (Portugal), OCU (Spain), Test-Achats (Belgium), Consumentenbond (Netherlands), Rad & Ron (Sweden), FRC (Switzerland), Stiftung Warentest (Germany), and UFC-Que Choisir (France).

<sup>5</sup> [Detect and Protect Against Antibiotic Resistance](#), US Department of Health.

<sup>6</sup> [Restricting Antimicrobial Use in Food Animals: Lessons from Europe](#), Tufts University, Microbe / Volume 6, Number 6, 2011.