

Another Look At Feed Additive Ban

What would it cost livestockmen and consumers if we had to slap a ban on antibiotic feed additives—ingredients used to promote faster, more uniform growth in animals.

Around this time a year ago a team of ERS researchers took that question to task. They based their analysis on conditions prevailing in 1970. But as most people know, there's been quite a jump since 1970 in the costs of raising livestock and in the price of red meat at the retail counter. Put another way, prohibiting the use of antibiotic feed additives would have greater economic consequences today than a couple of years back.

Now, ERS researchers have brought their estimates up to date, as discussion continues over whether these feed additives pose a hazard to human health and might have to be taken off the market. Here are some of the conclusions based on 1973 conditions:

Under the first of two assumptions used in this study—that producers feed more animals to keep output at pre-ban levels—total production costs would shoot up nearly \$802 million. That's \$325 million more, or 68 per-

cent, than the economists' previous estimate. Translated to the animal on-the-roof, this would mean an average cost increase of 75 cents per 100 pounds for cattle and calves and \$2.88 per 100 pounds for hogs.

If the entire cost hike were to be borne by consumers, they would have to up meat spending by \$3.85 per person in order to maintain red meat use at pre-ban levels.

This assumes, however, that livestock mortality rates would not change as a direct result of the ban. In the event death rates did climb, each 1-percent advance would raise liveweight production costs by an additional 16 cents per 100 pounds for cattle and calves and 20 cents for hogs to keep output at pre-ban levels. Total production costs would soar an additional \$96 million.

The second possibility assumed in this study is that producers would make no changes in their operations—i.e., they'd feed the same number of animals and for the same feeding periods. If that happened, livestock output and meat consumption would sink, with a subsequent rise in meat prices.

The economists figure total annual spending for beef, veal, and pork would increase by \$2.1 billion, or \$10.26 per person. Their previous estimate under this assumption was \$1.6 billion, or 24 percent less than the latest one.

With no change in demand relationships, livestock producers would have bigger net returns during the adjustment period. The combined net revenue of beef cattle, veal calf, and

hog growers could swell by as much as \$2.5 billion.

Each 1-percent gain in mortality associated with the ban would lift meat expenditures by an additional \$261 million, or about \$1.26 per capita. The added increase in producer net revenues would amount to some \$324 million.

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