

# Antibiotic restrictions proposed

PRINCETON, N.J. - U.S. Food and Drug Administration proposals to severely restrict feed-use antibiotics pose a serious threat to America's livestock industry and hence to food supplies and prices at the consumer level, according to American Cyanamid Company.

FDA Commissioner Donald Kennedy announced at a press conference in Washington on April 20 that he would move to restrict the use of penicillin and tetracycline antibiotics in livestock and poultry feeds for disease prevention, putting them on veterinary prescription only for treatment of disease.

The new Commissioner's decision, first disclosed at a

meeting of the National Advisory Food and Drug Committee (NAFDC) on April 15, came just eight days after he was sworn into office. Earlier, NAFDC recommended, without dissent, that tetracycline uses in animals not be restricted. The advisory group said the record did not support any change.

Cyanamid said it hopes further consideration of the mass of scientific data available, newly raised questions about substitute antibiotics listed by FDA, and the overwhelming importance of the tetracyclines for disease prevention will lead to a modification of the FDA position.

Tetracyclines have been widely used in livestock

feeds since 1950 to prevent disease, resulting not only in healthier animals, Cyanamid said, but also in increased feed efficiency and growth.

Commissioner Kennedy said his action was based on the theoretical possibility that such uses would result in populations of antibiotic-resistant bacteria which could lead to human health problems. The Commissioner advised the NAFDC that, although he could not point to a specific instance in which human disease is more difficult to treat because drug

resistance has arisen from an animal source, "It is likely that such problems could have gone unnoticed."

Cyanamid said that since chlortetracycline, the first of the antibiotic feed additives, has been in widespread use for 27 years, "We cannot agree that if such a problem had occurred it would have gone unnoticed" by American physicians.

Responding to the new Commissioner's "disappointment" that industry had not come up with other alternatives, Cyanamid pointed out that the search has been going on since 1950.

"Many new antibiotics have come on the market in the past 27 years," the company said. "The tetracyclines are still the most widely used because they are the most broadly beneficial."

The firm maintains a 640-acre agricultural research facility at Princeton, employing more than 400 scientists and technicians.

A USDA study, published in 1975, said banning antibiotics in livestock feeds could raise meat prices to U.S. consumers as much as \$2.1 billion per year.

Restrictions similar to those proposed by the FDA Commissioner were imposed in England in 1971. Addressing the American Society for Animal Science in August, 1976, Dr. R. Braude, University of Reading, England, said the British restrictions do not appear to have improved human health there. However, he said that, because of increased animal disease, veterinary prescriptions for antibiotics are about equal to the amount used in feed for disease prevention prior to the restriction.

## Early warning system set up for plant pests

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Plant pests invading the United States will be less likely to become established because of a new early warning system to find them promptly and take rapid action against them, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced last week.

The warning system, called "Project Pest Alert," establishes a 1200-mile detection belt around 16 major ports of entry that stand a high risk for offering a foothold to foreign plant pests. USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) plans to expand the project to 39 locations within three years.

Specially trained APHIS inspectors will systematically survey about 1000 locations in each detection belt. The goal is to find invading plant pests quickly so that they can be eradicated before they do real damage to American crops and gardens. Inspections will concentrate on major foreign insects, nematodes, snails, and slugs that attack home vegetable gardens and farm crops like corn, small grains, forage, soybeans, and citrus.

Project Pest Alert backstops the continuing aphis inspection of incoming vehicles, freight and

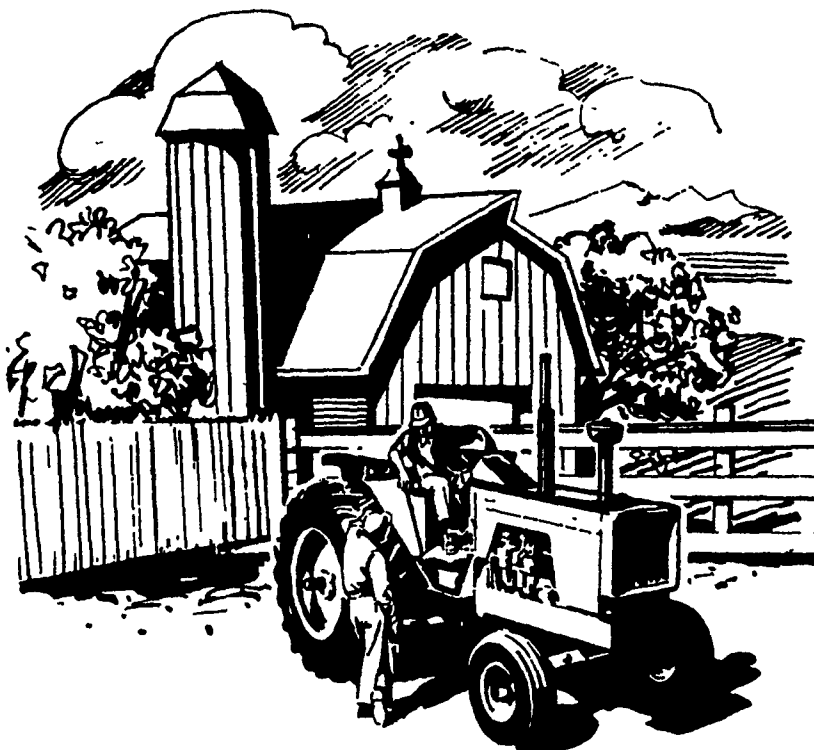
baggage at airports, seaports, offshore islands, and border crossings. More than 100 million such inspections were done in 1976. There is a continuing risk, however, that pests can slip through port inspections and establish themselves in the port area. There they could build up large populations to invade the rest of the country.

Project Pest Alert also supplements the ongoing state-federal program to monitor plant pest damage and coordinate action to reduce it. This program already issues the Cooperative Plant Pest Report, which gives the status of the current pest situation. Findings of Project Pest Alert will be published in this report.

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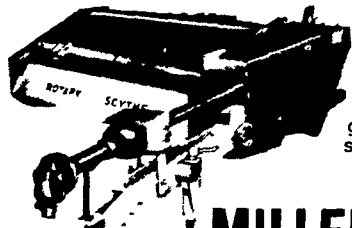
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