

21 May 2003

Benefits of antibiotic growth promoters confirmed

**M
E
D
I
A

R
E
L
E
A
S
E**

A review of more than 2000 published studies has confirmed the important role antibiotic growth promoters have in protecting the health of animals, improving the efficiency of food production and minimising the environmental impacts of intensive and extensive livestock farming.

Dr Stephen Page, author of the review, is a scientist who has been involved extensively in research and development and a veterinarian consulting in veterinary clinical pharmacology.

'This review confirms that the judicious selection and prudent use of antibiotic growth promoters is an important component of integrated livestock management' said Dr Page.

'Consumers are rewarded with significant advantages by the responsible selection and use of antibiotics in livestock production. Several significant studies highlight that by controlling bacterial disease in animals the transfer of antibiotic resistance through the food chain is minimised'.

'The review provides the regulator and agricultural commodity groups with important and scientifically valid information about the value of antibiotics in animal production. It is essential that these benefits be considered in regulatory review of antibiotics.

Other findings were:

- The use of antibiotic growth promoters saves the equivalent of 30 million tonnes of feed through reduced methane emission.
- For every one million pigs raised per year, environmental savings of around 221 tonnes of nitrates and 74 tonnes of phosphates are made.
- Conversion of feed to meat in chickens improved by 3 – 5 per cent, saving up to 100,000 tonnes of feed per year
- Decreased mortality of animals through control of disease.
- Grazing management of sheep and cattle can be dramatically improved.

'The use of antibiotic growth promoters goes hand in hand with advances in livestock production such as housing, environment, nutrition and genetic selection. These offer additional environmental, health and production advantages' said Dr Page.

The report was prepared for Avcare, the National Association for Crop Production and Animal Health.

<end>

Contact:
Heather Neil, Avcare Communications Director ph. 02 6230 6399
0413 117 996