

Animals on drugs

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) report that about 70 percent of all antibiotics made in the United States now go to fattening up livestock. In the mid-1980s, 16 million pounds of antibiotics were used in livestock production. Twenty-five million pounds are being used today. This ever increasing use is contributing to the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. According to the UCS, more than 95 percent of a common bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus* is now resistant to penicillin, requiring the use of newer and stronger drugs.

One of the main uses for antibiotics in the cattle industry is to combat so-called "feedlot diseases," diseases that are common when cattle are shipped to distant feedlots, mingled with animals from other herds, and switched from their natural diet of forage to a grain-based feedlot diet. Animals that remain on pasture from birth until market are so healthy that they rarely require antibiotic treatment.

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