

June 11, 2021

The Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign applauds the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for taking a needed step to stop the spread of antibiotic resistance.

Today, the FDA published [Guidance For Industry #263](#) which creates a path for drug makers to begin requiring prescriptions for the remaining medically important antibiotics that currently do not require them. The FDA's action covers drugs for use in both companion animals and food animals and allows two years for the changes to go into effect. As the FDA stated in the [Federal Register Notice](#) announcing this action, "the development of resistance to this important class of drugs [medically important antibiotics], and the resulting loss of their effectiveness as antimicrobial therapies, poses a serious public health threat." Requiring a veterinarian's involvement before an antibiotic can be given to animals reduces the risk that antibiotics will be overused and misused, thereby lessening this threat. Under current rules, some of the most important antibiotic drugs can be used in animals without the involvement of a medical professional. These [include](#) the drug of last resort polymyxin B and the critically important antibiotics tylosin and gentamicin. Once Guidance #263 is implemented these and other medically important drugs will no longer be available without a veterinarian's order and oversight.

This action builds on the FDA's earlier guidance which led to the requirement for a veterinarian's order for the use of medically important antibiotics in animal feed and water in 2017.

While this is a step in the right direction much more needs to be done to address the serious public health threat of antibiotic resistance. The FDA should set targets for reductions in antibiotic use in food animals, prohibit the routine use of antibiotics for disease prevention, limit how long antibiotics can be used in food animals, and create an integrated system to track both antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance in the food system.