

## Critics urge more livestock antibiotic oversight in Oregon

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

SALEM — Critics of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s oversight of livestock antibiotics want the state of Oregon to do it instead.

Over several years, the FDA has phased out the use of antibiotics for growth promotion and feed efficiency in livestock with the voluntary cooperation of pharmaceutical companies.

However, this approach hasn’t satisfied critics who say that antibiotics can still be used excessively by livestock producers for the prevention — rather than treatment — of disease.

“The loophole is they’re still allowing these drugs to be used on healthy animals,” said Michael Hansen, senior staff scientist with the Consumers Union, during a recent legislative hearing.

Under House Bill 785, Oregon livestock producers would only be able to provide a “medically important antibiotic” to their animals if a veterinarian determines it’s necessary to treat or control the spread of a disease or infection, or due to a medical procedure.

Farms that are considered “concentrated animal feeding operations” — such as many dairies and feedlots — would have to submit information about their antibiotic usage to the state government, with those records subject to disclosure as public documents.

Opponents argue the bill’s provisions unnecessarily infringe on a solution devised by the FDA at a federal level, creating state-specific restrictions that will leave Oregon’s livestock industry at a competitive disadvantage.

“They unfairly single out livestock producers,” said Nathan Jackson, president of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association.

The record-keeping requirements contained in HB 785 have also perturbed agriculture group representatives, who say they’re overly burdensome without being useful.

Chad Allen, president of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, said he already tracks antibiotic usage at his dairy near Tillamook, Ore., but objected to submitting records to state authorities.

“It doesn’t serve the public any good for me to hand that over and bring a spotlight into my business,” Allen said.

Supporters of HB 785 said the FDA’s approach is ineffective because growth promotion accounted for less than one-fourth of antibiotic usage in livestock production.

Roughly two-thirds of livestock antibiotic usage has been devoted to disease prevention, which isn’t affected by the FDA policy and allows animals to be kept in “crowded, factory farm conditions,” said Hansen.

It’s also “blatantly false” and a “mischaracterization” to claim that FDA’s strategy is binding on the livestock industry, said George Kimbrell, senior attorney with the Center for Food Safety, a nonprofit activist group that supports HB 785.

The FDA has issued guidance recommending certain actions to pharmaceutical manufacturers but these suggestions are not enforceable, Kimbrell said.

“What the FDA has done here does not have the force of law,” he said.

Opponents of HB 785 argue it’s a misconception that FDA’s policy is merely voluntary.

As of early 2017, all animal drug manufacturers have committed to change the labeled uses of antibiotics, so veterinarians cannot prescribe the drugs for growth promotion or similar uses, according to opponents.

# Trump budget deepens cuts to USDA

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

President Donald Trump’s preliminary “skinny budget” would slim down resources to farmers, ranchers and rural America, further cutting USDA’s already trimmed-down budget.

Trump’s FY2018 proposal would cut discretionary funding to USDA by 21 percent, a decrease of \$4.7 billion to \$17.9 billion.

The current USDA budget includes \$25 billion in discretionary spending for such programs as the special nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children called WIC, Rural Development, food safety, the U.S. Forest Service, research and conservation activities.

That’s on top of \$130 billion in congressionally mandated spending for a current overall budget of \$155 billion. Of that total, 71 percent goes to WIC and SNAP food stamps for 44.5 million Americans, 16 percent goes to farm and commodity programs, 7 percent goes to conservation and forestry and 6 percent goes to rural development, re-



Andrew Harnik/The Associated Press  
President Donald Trump speaks in the East Room of the White House on March 7. Trump’s “skinny budget” proposal would cut funding to USDA discretionary funding by \$4.7 billion.

search, food safety, marketing and regulatory functions and management.

In a climate of serious economic challenges in farm country, it’s not the time to cut programs and services that have already been on the chopping block the past few years, said R.J. Karney, American Farm Bureau Federation director of congressional relations.

The significant cut in USDA’s budget demonstrates the importance of having the secretary of agriculture at the table to champion the needs of farmers and ranchers. That

didn’t happen, as Trump’s nominee for that position, Sonny Purdue, has been sidelined by delays in the confirmation process, he said.

“Not having the secretary of ag at the table to help the budget process was made clear by the negative impact to the (USDA’s) budget,” he said.

National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson said in a statement the proposed cuts and message they send to rural America are “deeply disappointing.”

Family farmers and ranchers are enduring the worst farm economy in well over a decade and an inadequate safety net already hamstrung by \$23 billion in budget cuts, he said.

“The last thing our members need right now is more cuts to agencies and programs that provide incredibly important work, especially in the middle of the current farm crisis,” he said.

All the details have not yet been released, but funding cuts would target USDA’s statistical capabilities within the National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service and USDA

Service Center Agencies — Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources and Conservation Service and Rural Development. It would also eliminate the Waste and Wastewater loan and grant program.

NASS provides roughly 400 reports annually on 120 crops and 45 livestock products, with estimates on acreage, yield and production. That information is critical to farmers and ranchers in decision-making, Karney said.

ERS provides economic analysis on food, agriculture, natural resources and economic development in rural America, which farmers, ranchers and government officials rely on to guide policy and farming businesses, he said.

Other ag organizations are concerned with funding cuts aimed at conservation and rural development.

The National Association of Conservation Districts said without USDA’s conservation programs, farmers, ranchers and rural communities won’t have the resources or assistance they need to keep soils healthy, water clean and wildlife abundant.

The National Sustainable

Agriculture Coalition said Trump’s budget request misses the mark when it comes to the needs of rural America — gutting USDA’s ability to invest in rural development, targeting rural water and wastewater management programs and moving to privatize conservation planning.

The National Young Farmers Coalition said the budget proposal dramatically underestimates the economic urgency facing rural America — recruiting a new generation of farmers to take over for America’s aging farming population by making rural life a less-viable option.

“Looking to the future, the thing to keep in mind is that Congress writes the budget, not the president,” AFBF’s Karney said.

House Ag Committee Chairman Michael Conaway, R-Texas, said Congress needs to be extremely careful not to exacerbate the current struggles farmers and ranchers are facing. He pointed out that the latest estimates show the 2014 Farm Bill has saved more than \$100 billion, saying “agriculture has done more than its fair share.”

## Ag pad will remain open at Pendleton’s airport

### Blast wall to assuage safety concerns with drone range

By GEORGE PLAVERN  
EO Media Group

PENDLETON, Ore. — The northernmost agricultural pad at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport is open for business.

Members of the Pendleton Airport Commission held a special meeting Monday to resolve safety concerns between the pad and nearby drone operations. The city recently purchased two 40-foot shipping containers that will act as a blast wall to protect sensitive



EO Media Group file photo

A RQ-7B Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle lands at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in May 2014 after a short inaugural flight in Pendleton.

equipment. The containers were expected to arrive at the airport by Wednesday.

Darryl Abling, who manages the Pendleton Unmanned Aerial Systems Range, previ-

ously recommended the airport temporarily close the ag pad while UAS activities are relocated to the north end of the airfield. The concern, Abling said, was planes kicking up rocks

and debris that could possibly damage drones or injure flight crews.

After meeting with stakeholders last week, Abling agreed a barrier would be an effective solution in the short term. Crop dusting pilots stressed the need to settle the issue quickly, since farmers are already applying fertilizer to their fields and the window for work is finite.

Two pilots had expressed interest in using the disputed ag pad — Andrew Kilgore, of K2 Aerial Application, and Brad Wahl, of Wildhorse Helicopters. Kilgore hired an attorney after he was denied use of the pad, but never got to the point of litigation.

There was some discussion about making the pad open to

the public under a pay-as-you-go system, though that raised questions about who would manage the pad and whether it would open the city to liability. As it is, the airport leases its ag pads to single operators.

The airport commission ultimately agreed it would lease the pad to Wahl, who would share its use with Kilgore.

“I don’t think it has to be complicated,” Wahl said. “I think I can work with him, he can work with me and that would be fine.”

Kilgore’s attorney, Michael Schultz, said he felt the agreement was a step in the right direction.

“I am heartened that we are in the position today where we are cooperating,” Schultz said.



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