

Emma Rose

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics

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Dear [supermarket CEO]

This letter has been undersigned by over 2,400 members of the public. Please see full list enclosed.

As you will be aware, [a recent investigation](#) led by the Alliance to Save our Antibiotics has revealed the presence of antibiotic-resistant E.coli in UK-origin pig and chicken meat sold in a number of major UK food retailers.

These [findings reveal the full extent of resistance to key human antibiotics in E.coli](#) present on supermarket meat. A staggering 24% of poultry samples (22 out of 91) tested positive for ESBL E.coli (which is resistant to the modern cephalosporin and penicillin-type antibiotics).

The study also revealed E.coli bacteria on pig and poultry meat which showed high levels of resistance to Gentamicin - an antibiotic which is critical importance in treating serious urinary-tract infections in people. Resistance to the antibiotic Trimethoprim was found on 51% of pork and poultry samples. Trimethoprim is used to treat over half of lower urinary-tract infections in humans.

These findings are extremely concerning. E. coli is by far the most common cause of urinary-tract infections and of dangerous blood poisoning in humans. The last 25 years has seen a steady increase in resistance to some of the most important remaining antibiotics which can treat these infections. Experts now predict that, of the 10 million people predicted to die from drug-resistant infections each year by 2050, more than three million will lose their lives to antibiotic-resistant E. coli.

This discovery comes at a time of heightened global concern around veterinary use of our most important drugs. In the face of a public health crisis of this magnitude, the profligate use of important antibiotics in groups of livestock is wholly unjustifiable.

Your supermarket must now share the responsibility for tackling this crisis by taking steps to review standards for meat and animal products, and setting clear specifications around antibiotic stewardship and good animal husbandry.

The Alliance, along with +2,400 members of the public, is calling on UK food retailers to work with farmers and suppliers to adopt a publicly available policy on farm-antibiotic use within your supply chain, outlining a commitment and corresponding timeline to:

- **Ban the routine, purely preventative use of antibiotics in groups of entirely healthy animals (prophylaxis). This must include a commitment to stop all mass-medication in feed or water where no disease is diagnosed in any of the animals in the group being treated**
- **Ban all preventative use and all group treatments using the 'critically important' antibiotics (including for dry-cow therapy). These antibiotics may only be used where sensitivity testing, or the results of recent sensitivity testing, shows that no other antibiotics are likely to work**

These specifications should be set for nationally sourced meat and dairy products in the first instance, followed by a widening of these criteria throughout the supply chain to cover imported meat.

Many food businesses within the EU and US are now publically committing to policies to reduce antibiotic usage within their supply chains. There is now an opportunity for forward-thinking UK businesses to respond to a changing market, growing consumer concern, forthcoming regulatory scrutiny, and an urgent need to safeguard our antibiotics for future generations.

As major purchasers of meat, dairy and poultry products, food retailers are extremely well-placed to incentivise best practice and exert upwards pressure on supply chains. This must be coupled with efforts to coordinate with current antibiotic-use data collection initiatives and to record supply chain usage – so as to enable target setting and benchmarking for further reductions.

I very much hope that you will now take a lead on this issue, and would be delighted to meet with you to discuss this further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,



Emma Rose, the Alliance to Save our Antibiotics
2,405 members of the general public

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics is made up of the following organisations:

Agriculture
Agricultural & Rural Convention
Albert Schweitzer Stiftung
ANDA Asociacion Nacional para la Defensa de los Animales
Arzteinitiative gegen Massentierhaltung (Doctors in Germany)
Campaign for Better Hospital Food
College of medicine
Compassion in World Farming
Eating Better
Euro Coop
European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP)
European Environmental Bureau
European Public Health Alliance
European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases
Faculty of Public Health
Farms Not Factories
Food and Water Europe
Free Range Dairy
Friends of the Earth Europe
GAIA Global Action in the Interest of Animals
German Trauma Society
Global Sepsis Alliance
Greenpeace UK
Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help - UK E coli Support Group
Health Care without Harm
Hellenic Sepsis Study Group

How It Should Be supermarket
Institute of Primary Care & Public Health, Cardiff University School of Medicine
International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside
Intimate With Nature Society
Malta Health Network
Medact
MRSA Action UK
National Council of Women of Great Britain
National Obesity Forum
OneKind
Organic Research Centre
PAN Germany
PAN UK
Pasture-fed Livestock Association
Real Bread Campaign
Royal College of Pathologists
Royal College of Physicians
Scottish Antimicrobial Prescribing Group
Send a Cow
ShareAction
Slow Food in the UK
Soil Association
Sustain
Sustainable Food Trust
Sustainable Restaurant Association
The Permaculture Association
The School of Artisan Food
UK Sepsis Trust