

ANTIBIOTIC USE IN FARMING — WHAT'S LEGAL IN THE UK?



UK LAW SAYS:

- Veterinary medicines containing an antibiotic can only be bought if prescribed by a veterinarian.
- A record must be kept of all medicines administered to food-producing animals for five years
- Statutory withdrawal periods must be observed before slaughter in order to minimise residues in food.
- The use of antibiotics as growth promoters is illegal in the UK.

Farm antibiotic use in the UK has declined by about 50% over the past five years. Much of this can be attributed to voluntary schemes and positive actions by farmers.

THERE ARE NO LAWS IN THE UK TO PREVENT:

- The routine use of antibiotics
- Preventative use of antibiotics in groups of animals
- Veterinarians prescribing antibiotics for animals they haven't examined recently.
- The use of High Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HPCIA) in groups and/or without sensitivity testing
- The use of colistin, an antibiotic of last resort in human medicine.

THERE IS NOTHING IN UK LAW TO STOP THE IMPORT OF MEAT THAT IS:

- Produced with the routine use of antibiotics, including HPCIA
- Produced with the use of antibiotics as growth promoters
- Produced to lower welfare standards than are legal in the UK.

Current UK legal standards, rather than voluntary initiatives, are what matters most when negotiating trade deals. Practices that are not yet banned in the UK cannot be banned for imports. Efforts to move away from these systems will be undermined if the UK is flooded with cheaply produced meat from abroad.