



Resistance AND Responsibility

Antibiotic use in supermarket supply chains

ALLIANCE TO
SAVE OUR
ANTIBIOTICS



What can you do?

The rise of antibiotic resistance is a worldwide crisis caused by the overuse of antibiotics in humans and animals. In livestock farming, antibiotics can be used routinely to compensate for poor husbandry and outside of the UK and the EU, they are often still used to promote faster growth. As shoppers we can be unwittingly contributing to this issue by buying products which contain meat, dairy, eggs or farmed fish which have been produced with the irresponsible use of antibiotics.

It's not always easy to tell which products fall into the 'responsible' or 'irresponsible' antibiotic use categories, so this guide has been produced to help you be a more informed shopper when you're at the supermarket.

1 Buy less meat and dairy

Supermarkets sell products with ingredients from around the world, including meat, dairy, fish and eggs. Some countries are using fewer antibiotics overall in their livestock production than others and regulation for how antibiotics can be used on farms differs by country. It can be hard to know where the meat you buy comes from, or how it is produced, especially if it has been processed or included in a ready meal.

We also know that some species, in particular pigs and poultry, tend to receive more antibiotics overall than others and antibiotic use is often far higher in intensive, lower-welfare farming systems.

Many people are reducing their meat consumption because of concerns about climate change, biodiversity loss or animal welfare, and wanting to reduce your contribution to antibiotic resistance is another valid reason to eat less meat. Fewer farmed animals means less intensive farming conditions, which lessens the financial case for companies to use antibiotics in their supply chains.

But if/when you are buying meat in the supermarket, here are some tips to help you shop better:

Buy better meat and dairy

2 Look for a higher-welfare label

A recent survey from the Alliance to Save our Antibiotics found that antibiotic usage on a sample of UK Soil Association organic farms was four times lower than the national average*. This is because strict organic rules do not allow routine antibiotic use, but also because organic farmers are required to keep animals in healthier conditions than occurs in intensive farming, with more access to the outdoors. Free-range and pasture-fed animals are also likely to have low antibiotic use, despite having less strict rules on using antibiotics than organic farming. Look for these labels to buy higher-welfare.



3 Buy fresh

Our research found that when a product has been processed (eg as cooked meat or into a ready meal), information about country of origin or welfare was often missing from the label. If the label doesn't tell you where it's from or what type of system the animal was raised in, question whether you trust the provenance – remember that only the labels shown above have independently agreed standards behind them, and other labels may be less meaningful. The Alliance's recent survey found that many UK supermarkets' farm antibiotic policies tended to cover their own-brand fresh products. If in doubt, buy fresh, not processed. The UK currently is the fifth-lowest user of farm antibiotics in Europe, so buying high-welfare British is a good option.

4 How much information does the brand give you?

Our recent survey found that branded products are generally not covered by supermarket products. Check the label on branded products to see if it tells you which country the ingredients come from and if the animal was reared in a high-welfare system where antibiotics are more likely to be used only when genuinely needed. This goes for all products such as pizzas, pies, quiches, soups, ready meals, yoghurts, desserts etc.

5 Ask your supermarket to stock more higher-welfare ranges

The range of higher-welfare options stocked by your local supermarket or in your online shop can be limited. If you feel like your supermarket should stock more higher-welfare options, get in touch with them and ask them to increase their selection. You can write to their head office or tweet them – copy us in @ASOAntibiotics and we will retweet you

6 Sign the petition

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics is calling on Asda, Aldi, Co-op, Lidl, Morrison's, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose to:

- Expand the scope of their antibiotics policies to cover all animal products, regardless of country of origin or product line;
- Only sell branded products that have been produced with the responsible use of antibiotics.

* <https://www.saveourantibiotics.org/news/press-release/survey-finds-organic-farming-has-much-lower-antibiotic-use-than-the-uk-national-average/>

This guide is supported by:



For more info go to
www.saveourantibiotics.org

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