



LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
25TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

March 26, 2013

Dr. Margaret Hamburg
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

Dear Commissioner Hamburg:

A recent article published in the journal *European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) Molecular Medicine*¹ has confirmed animal-to-human transmission of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). For the first time, whole genome sequencing was used to compare MRSA bacteria collected from patients and their farm animals, which were found to be identical. This study adds to the extensive scientific research supporting the connection between the overuse of antibiotics – 80% of which are used on otherwise healthy animals in the United States – and the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Evidence that resistant bacteria transfer from animals to humans should be a clear call for significant, meaningful action to protect one of the greatest advancements in medical history – the development of antibiotics.

As you are well aware, I have been dedicated for many years to ending the overuse of antibiotics with farm animals precisely because that practice spawns antibiotic resistant bacteria that are a severe threat to human health. MRSA kills 18,000 Americans every year – more than HIV/AIDS. We must act, and we must act now. This is an issue of life and death, and we cannot wait.

¹ Harrison, et al. (2013) Whole genome sequencing identified zoonotic transmission of MRSA isolates with the novel *mecA* homologue *mecC*. *EMBO Mol. Med.* 5: 1-7.

The FDA has known about the seriousness of this issue since 1977 but has repeatedly failed to act. The current strategy of voluntary guidance regarding “judicious use” of antibiotics is doomed to fail, and it does not reflect the extreme urgency of this issue. Protecting the public health should be the utmost goal of your agency. I implore you to take swift, immediate action to end the overuse of antibiotics with food animals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Louise M. Slaughter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress