

Antibiotics and Pigs' Blood: You Are What What You Eat Eats

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Despite the title, I'm not blogging after too many drinks or while performing some satanic ritual. What I mean to say is: If you are what you eat, then you are *also* what your food gets its nourishment from. Two recent cases might quell your appetite.

Case One: [Antibiotics in animal feed](#) [1]. The FDA announced last week that 25 pharmaceutical companies would voluntarily phase out antibiotics used in feed to promoting animal growth. The drugs were initially meant to eliminate illnesses in animals, as they are in humans. But in the in the 1970s, scientists noticed antibiotics made for bigger livestock. Heavier animals fetch higher prices at market, so antibiotics became a common animal-feed additive. Then, as exposure to those antibiotics worked through the food chain, humans started to show more tolerance to antibiotics used to treat illnesses. It seemed that pathogens in human bodies were reacting to the antibiotics introduced in animal bodies. The CDC called for a change in antibiotic practices last year, attributing 23,000 deaths annually to [infections resistant to antibiotics](#) [2].

According to consumer group [The Organic Center](#) [2], "Statistics released by FDA show that animal production uses over 29 million pounds of antibiotics annually. If everyone chose just one organic product out of every 10 they purchased, we could eliminate over 2.5 million pounds of unnecessary antibiotic use each year. That could go a long way in reducing the development of antibiotic resistance."

Yikes.

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The FDA is taking heed and hopefully we'll have those pathogens under control soon. In the meantime, some companies, like [Chick-Fil-A](#) [3], are switching to meat from antibiotic-free animals to appease the concerned public.

That's a start on antibiotics, as [The New York Times editorial board encourages](#) [4], but jury is still out on this next issue.

Case Two: Porcine Blood.

The [Wall Street Journal reports](#) [5] that porcine plasma, a powder made from pigs' blood and mixed into animal feed, may be spreading the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) virus. It's what's for dinner! A reduced U.S. pork herd could lead to higher costs for [manufacturers of pork foods](#) [6] like lunchmeat and, everyone's favorite, bacon. Retailers and consumers are likely to feel a hog shortage in their wallet too. The spread of PED also makes U.S. pork exports less appealing to trading partners.

In the age of information, consumers can find out almost anything about their food. And they care about what what they eat eats. Consumers are also becoming more interested in how their food lived and even died. Animal rights groups are pushing for better treatment of [hogs](#) [7] during gestation and [chickens](#) [8] during slaughter.

Where do you stand on the use of antibiotics and animal rights in food production?

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Links:

[1] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/03/fda-25-drug-companies-phase-out-animal-antibiotics>

[2] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2013/09/cdc-overuse-antibiotics-livestock-linked-resistant-bacteria>

[3] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/02/chick-fil-serve-antibiotic-free-chicken>

[4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/29/opinion/antibiotic-use-and-abuse-on-the-farms.html?action=click&module=Search®ion=searchResults%230&version=&url=http%3A%2F%2Fquery.nytimes.com%2Fsearch%2Fsitesearch%2F%3Faction%3Dclick%26region%3DMasthead%26pgtype%3DHomepage%26module%3DSearchSubmit%26contentCollection%3DHomepage%26t%3Dqry218%23%2Fantibiotics%2Fsince1851%2Fallresults%2F1%2Fallauthors%2Fnewest%2F>

[5] <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB1000142405270230468810457946325040>

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SB10001424052702304688104579463250402491502.html

[6] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/02/hormel-1q-profit-jumps-skipper-acquisition-bacon-demand>

[7] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/01/smithfield-asks-producers-phase-out-gestation-crates>

[8] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/03/groups-push-more-humane-poultry-slaughter>

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