Hold the Antibiotics: McDonald’s

McDonald’s raises the bar for responsible antibiotic use in beef

The Big Mac is taking a big bite out of the overuse of antibiotics.

In December, McDonald’s released a new policy to restrict medically important antibiotics in its beef supply chain. It will monitor antibiotic use in its top 10 global beef sourcing markets and set reduction targets by the end of 2020.

Whether you eat at McDonald’s or not, this is an important step forward for public health. We rely on antibiotics to treat life-threatening infections and to ensure that surgery, chemotherapy and other medical procedures are safe. But the overuse of antibiotics is leading to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, called “superbugs,” that are now shaking the foundations of modern medicine.

“The Golden Arches just raised the bar for responsible antibiotic use in meat production,” said Matt Wellington, director of our national Stop the Overuse of Antibiotics campaign. “McDonald’s new commitment is a promising step forward that will help preserve antibiotics for the future, and that’s something we should all be happy about.”

Misuse of antibiotics is one of the biggest threats to global health today

While overuse in medical settings is a factor in the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, industrialized livestock operations—like the ones that supply McDonald’s beef—play an outsized role in this looming public health threat.

A staggering 70 percent of medically important antibiotics are sold for use in livestock and poultry operations here in the United States. These drugs are routinely given to animals to help them survive crowded, stressful and unsanitary conditions, regardless of whether the animals are actually sick.

The stakes couldn’t be higher. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conservatively estimates that at least 2 million Americans are sickened and 23,000 die each year as a direct result of antibiotic-resistant infections. However, recent estimates suggest more than 150,000 Americans died of antibiotic-resistant infections in 2010.

The World Health Organization has called antibiotic resistance “one of the biggest threats to global health, food security and development today.”

Commitments from McDonald’s, KFC, Subway and more

We shouldn’t allow the meat industry to misuse our life-saving medicines just to make cows a little fatter and burgers a little cheaper.

Continued on Page 3
PIRG CONSUMER WATCHDOG

Coloradans overwhelmingly vote to limit payday loan interest rates

Coloradans are fed up with sky-high payday loan interest rates.

On Nov. 6, Proposition 111 to limit payday loan interest rates passed with 77 percent support.

Payday lenders can no longer charge an annual percentage rate (APR) of more than 36 percent.

“We signed on more than 100 groups in support of stopping predatory payday loans in Colorado,” said CoPIRG State Director Danny Katz. “Prior to Proposition 111, the law allowed for rates upwards of 200 percent. This is a huge win for Colorado consumers.”

Payday loans are often no more than $500. They come with high interest rates that primarily target low-income individuals facing financial hardships, trapping them in a cycle of debt. Earlier this year, we delivered nearly 200,000 signatures in favor of the 36-percent cap. We were part of a broad coalition to rein in predatory payday lending in Colorado, and we are proud to be part of such a huge win for Coloradans.

21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION

By ribbon and petitions, CoPIRG pushes for people-friendly streets

Wrapping Denver’s City and County Hall with a 400-foot-long ribbon strung with petitions, CoPIRG called for a new investment in people-friendly streets.

The petitions call for a $22 million increase in the city budget for sidewalks, bikeways and other safety improvements. On average, one person dies each week in traffic accidents in Denver, with more than 50 deaths in 2018. Without additional funding, advocates say the situation will not improve any time soon.

“Unfortunately, at the rate Denver is building out our missing sidewalk network and adding bike lanes, it’s going to be 100 years before all our streets are truly people-friendly,” said CoPIRG State Director Danny Katz, an organizer of the event. “That’s why we’re calling on Mayor Hancock and the city to increase spending to $22 million next year.”

CoPIRG is a member of The Denver Streets Partnership, a coalition of organizations advocating for people-friendly streets in Denver.

21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION

In unanimous vote, Colorado adopts California auto pollution standards

It’s unanimous: Colorado air regulators support a cleaner, healthier future.

On Nov. 16, Colorado’s Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) voted to adopt California’s Low Emission Vehicle Program (LEV) or “Clean Car” standards for cars and trucks. Vehicle emissions are the primary contributors to Colorado’s air pollution.

“This is personal. I bike, I run, I love hiking,” said CoPIRG Foundation Director Danny Katz. “By adopting the advanced clean car standards, Colorado can take a big step toward reducing smog and air toxins, cut carbon pollution, and save Coloradans money at the pump.”

Prior to the vote, CoPIRG organized an event to announce that more than 7,600 Coloradans have called on the AQCC to adopt the standards. Colorado is now one of 13 states to adopt California’s LEV standard.

Read more updates on our work at http://copirg.org
McDonald’s raises the bar for responsible antibiotic use in beef

For years, CoPIRG and our national network have called on major restaurants, including McDonald’s, to take action. And our advocacy helped persuade McDonald’s to stop serving chicken raised on our life-saving medicines in 2015—a commitment that helped push chicken supplier Tyson Foods to start raising its chickens without routine antibiotics.

KFC, Subway and other restaurants and suppliers quickly followed suit, and we estimate that soon nearly half of all chicken in this country will be raised without the routine use of medically important antibiotics.

McDonald’s newest commitment to reduce the routine use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supply is the culmination of over a year’s work by CoPIRG and our coalition partners.

More than 80 international stakeholders, including health, environmental and consumer groups, called on McDonald’s to act. We organized top medical professionals across the country to speak out about the health risks, and our national network delivered more than 150,000 petition signatures to McDonald’s headquarters during its annual shareholder meeting.

Setting off a chain reaction

In October 2018, CoPIRG Foundation held an event outside of McDonald’s headquarters to release the collaborative “Chain Reaction IV” report grading the top 25 U.S. burger chains on their antibiotics policies.

McDonald’s received an “F” in the report, and later responded that the company would release a global antibiotics policy for its beef by the end of the year.

Today, we’re pleased that McDonald’s followed through on its pledge to take the next step in restricting antibiotics use. As the largest purchaser of beef in the U.S., McDonald’s action could spark an industry-wide change as the beef industry will now have to meet McDonald’s—and consumers’—demands to reduce the routine use of antibiotics in beef.

With McDonald’s taking an important step in the right direction, CoPIRG will continue to work with the burger chain that’s served billions to set strong reduction targets by the end of 2020.

“Consumers called on McDonald’s to hold the antibiotics,” said Matt. “Its response shows progress, and we look forward to seeing the company continue to use its size for good when it comes to preserving life-saving antibiotics.”

By Matt Wellington, director
Campaign to Stop the Overuse of Antibiotics
Ban Roundup

Jury finds Monsanto’s Roundup responsible for man’s terminal cancer

Monsanto has been held accountable for hiding the health risks of Roundup in a California courtroom.

In August 2018, a jury awarded millions in damages to Dewayne Johnson, a former school groundskeeper who claimed his terminal non-Hodgkin lymphoma was caused by years of using the herbicide Roundup. Twenty-six million pounds of Roundup are sprayed on school grounds, parks and gardens every year, and Johnson’s case was the first to go to trial of more than 800 patients suing Monsanto.

“I would never have sprayed that product on school grounds or around people if I knew it would cause harm,” Johnson testified. His lawyer said, “We were finally able to show the jury the secret, internal Monsanto documents proving that Monsanto has known for decades that Roundup could cause cancer.”

As the evidence against Roundup piles up, CoPIRG is working to protect our public health by banning the herbicide in Colorado.

Thanks to you

Dear CoPIRG member,

This winter, CoPIRG and our national network celebrated when McDonald’s announced it would cut routine antibiotic use in its beef supply chain. It’s a welcome victory for public health and it wouldn’t have been possible without the support of members like you.

Thank you,

Danny Katz, State Director
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