

The Pew Campaign on Human Health and Industrial Farming held a briefing for about 50 congressional staff in support of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act. Senator Diane Feinstein and Representative Louise Slaughter, co-sponsors of the bill, were not present. Pew brought together a panel in an attempt to show the economic viability of producing meat without antibiotics. The group began the meeting by showing the second segment of the CBS Evening News report- which claimed that Denmark benefited from banning sub-therapeutic antibiotics- in entirety. A bag of medicated poultry feed was prominently displayed at the head table. Very few questions were asked of the speakers.

1. Dr. Stephen Jay (Moderator)

Indiana University School of Public Health

Jay called drug-resistant organisms a “crisis in the making.” He said that 70 percent of all antibiotics are given to healthy animals in agriculture but that we don’t know the exact numbers because farmers aren’t required to report how much they use. He said that the threat posed by overuse of antibiotics in human medicine has been addressed. He recommended that we follow Denmark’s example. During the question and answer period, Jay pointed out that currently, antibiotic residue is not allowed in meat by law.

Quotes and Observations:

- “E. coli and salmonella were responsible for 300,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths last year. One-fifth of all E. coli cases are resistant to drugs.”

2. Bill Niman

BN Ranch, Founder of Niman Ranch, Inc.

Niman began by explaining the history of Niman Ranch and his involvement with the Pew Commission. He stated that “after visiting hens in battery cages in 2006, he realized that he could do more good by leaving the day to day workings of the company.” He said that public health is being negatively impacted by our “overconsumption of animal based foods” and complained that the lobbying from agricultural and pharmaceutical groups is threatening to slow change in this area. He said that, “behind closed doors,” every animal agriculture industry is trying to reduce herd supply because meat and dairy is overproduced. He said PAMTA was needed because neither USDA nor FDA are willing to change regulations, so they were forced to use this route.

Quotes and Observations

- Referring to CBS report: “I am still moved by the clarity of that report.”
- “I want to restore that traditional, reasonable way of farming.”
- “We can’t replace animal husbandry with manmade chemicals.”
- About reducing the amount of meat we eat: “I definitely think it is a good thing”

- **“The time to reduce production and increase food prices is here.”**
- “I highly recommend that you read every word of the Pew Commission’s report.”

3. Andrew Carlson

Central Coast Farms

Carlson is a third generation poultry farmer with a MBA and an interest in developing the niche market of “antibiotic-free” meat. He said that making the switch to antibiotic-free has required an increase in space per bird of 35 percent and a different feed formula. He emphasized the need for increased research on the topic before other producers could be expected to change their practices. He explained the route that his business has taken. Carlson was very down-to-earth and seemed to approach the issue of antibiotics with an open mind. When asked why he chose to support PAMTA, he said: **“I’m not saying that PAMTA is the right tool, I’m just here for the discussion** and to share my experiences. I’m wondering which regulatory agency we are going to have to deal with.”

Quotes and Observations

- “There is a cost associated with this market niche.”
- “We don’t need a blunt instrument to deal with the issue of antibiotics, we need a scalpel.”
- “We need to look at all of the data, not just the talking points.”

4. Steve Ells

Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc.

Ells stated that his restaurants serve “food with integrity.” He said that he is proud to serve food raised without exploiting the animals or environment. He said when he visited Niman Ranch (a major supplier of meat for the company), he saw pigs “living their lives as nature intended.” He said he was horrified when he visited conventional farms. He praised PAMTA and said that it would expedite the “needed” transition to antibiotic-free production.

Quotes and Observations:

- About antibiotic-free meat: “It’s not an elitist pursuit as it has been in the past.”
- **“My decision to do this wasn’t rooted in science, but by a philosophical belief that animals aren’t meant to be treated like that.”**

5. Linda Boardman

Applegate Farms

Boardman shared that her company contracts with 300 independent antibiotic-free farms. She said her company has recorded a 22 percent growth rate over the last five years. She said that the idea that most people can’t afford organic/natural products is the “great American food myth.” She said that, even

during the recession, the organic market hasn't dropped. Boardman stated that her producers have found that they needed an increase in space per animal of 15 percent. They have switched to all-vegetarian feeds for their animals. She said that the slaughter weights and feed conversion rates have been similar to conventionally-raised animals. Boardman showed results of a survey showing that all ages and demographics are interested in natural foods- but she didn't have information about the size of the survey.

Quotes and Observations:

- In her presentation, she showed images of a lab coat to represent conventional farms and a man in overalls to represent small farms.
- "Meat is the final frontier for organics."
- About antibiotic-free production: "**It eliminates the hidden cost of cheap food**- humane animal treatment, environmental impact, human health and antibiotic resistance."