

Healthy Measures: Hormones and Antibiotics in Food Production

March is Nutrition Month! This year's theme is *Celebrate food...from field to table*. During March, the Healthy Measures E-bulletin will feature various topics related to this theme. Today's topic is the use of hormones and antibiotics in food production.

Hormones

Hormones occur naturally in animals, plants and humans. The Canadian Government has approved the use of hormonal growth promoters by the Canadian beef industry. However, this use has not been approved for use with pigs, poultry or dairy cows.

Not all cattle producers use hormonal growth promoters. The use of growth promoters results in leaner meat, more growth using less feed and a reduced cost of production - which means less expensive beef for the consumer.

According to Health Canada and the US Food and Drug Administration, hormonal growth promoters are considered safe to use in beef production. When used correctly, the levels found in food products such as beef are too low to be considered a risk to human health.

Antibiotics

Health Canada has approved the use of antibiotics with dairy and beef cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens and turkeys.

Beef: Antibiotic residues in beef are extremely rare and recent residue testing by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency showed 100 per cent compliance. If residue levels were detected, the meat could not be sold.

Dairy: Milk from animals treated with antibiotics cannot be offered for sale until the withdrawal period has passed. Milk is checked for quality and composition when it is picked up at the dairy farm. It is always checked for antibiotics at the dairy processing plant.

Poultry: Only healthy birds are allowed in the Canadian food supply. Antibiotics may be used on the advice of a veterinarian to maintain the health of the flocks. Some antibiotics may be added to chicken feed to prevent illness or treat disease. Poultry farmers maintain strict records, called the "flock sheet", which provides information about the birds and medication used. Withdrawal time must be recorded and this information is sent to the processing plant. Treated birds can not be marketed unless this information has been provided.

Pork: Antibiotics are sometimes used to support the health of pigs. The Canadian Food Inspection agency screens meat products for chemical residues, including antibiotics. It is very rare that residues are found in Canadian meat, but if any is detected, the affected meat is not sold.

For more information:

[Dietitians of Canada – Nutrition Month](#)

[Chicken Farmers of Canada – Antibiotics: Your Questions Answered](#)

[Beef Information Centre – Antibiotic Use in Beef Cattle Industry](#)

[Dairy Farmers of Ontario - Quality](#)

If you have questions on nutrition and healthy eating, contact EatRight Ontario at 1-877-510-5102 to speak to a Registered Dietitian.

Healthy Measures: Eat Well, Be Active and Be Yourself!