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POSITION STATEMENT

Statement on Use of Antibiotic Feed Additives by the Poultry Industry

(Original statement approved by AAAP Board, August 2008)

The feeding of prophylactic levels of antibiotic feed additives to commercial poultry ensures good enteric health, less pollution to the environment and a safer product for the consumer. Often referred to as antibiotic growth promoters, antibiotic feed additives are commonly used in commercially raised poultry for the main purpose of maintaining good enteric health. Because enteric health is enhanced, the use of antibiotic feed additives frequently results in faster growth rates, better feed conversions and a safer meat supply for the consumer. The improved growth rate and feed utilization in poultry have been shown to be primarily due to the adequate control of toxigenic strains of *Clostridium perfringens* types A and C and by the improved utilization of nutrients by the bird[1,2]. The improved utilization of nutrients results in less nitrogen, phosphorus and other undesirable nutrients being excreted into the environment.

Following the bans on antibiotic feed additives imposed by the European Union in the mid 1990s, the detection of *C. perfringens* and its toxins in poultry m eat have increased and are emerging as a new threat to both, poultry and human health[3]. Since *C. perfringens* is the main organism targeted by the prophylactic feeding of antibiotic feed additives, the surge in its detection in poultry meat following the bans is not an unexpected finding. Researchers have also documented decreases in *Salmonella* shedding by the prophylactic feeding of antibiotics in poultry[4]. Following the bans on antibiotic feed additives, the incidence of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* have increased in various parts of Europe and this presents a potentially higher probability for cases of food-borne illness for consumers[5]. The results observed in Europe are in agreement with estimates based on risk analysis that indicate that the removal of antibiotic feed additives may actually increase the risk of food-borne illness in people[5,6].

While the bans have had no impact on improving antibiotic resistance in people, they have had adverse effects on poultry health and productivity and have resulted in a significant increase in the use of antibiotics for therapeutic purposes[7,8]. In Denmark alone, antibiotic use for treatment of food-producing animals has increased every year following the bans, from 48,000 kilograms in 1996 to 112,650 kilograms in 2005[9].

Based on all of these facts, the American Association of Avian Pathologists supports the continued safe and effective use of antibiotic feed additives in commercial poultry production.

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