

POULTRY FACT SHEET

ANTIBIOTICS IN POULTRY PRODUCTION

- Currently, there is no credible scientific data that supports the idea that treating chickens with antibiotics negatively impacts human health.
- Since the 1950s, the FDA requires by law that all poultry is antibiotic free before it enters the food chain or can be sold to consumers.
- When a regulated antibiotic is administered to a chicken, the FDA requires a strict “withdrawal” period to ensure that the antibiotic has been metabolized and is no longer present in the chicken’s system before it even leaves the farm.
- The use of veterinarian-administered antibiotics is based on the needs of the chicken. Similar to humans, chickens get sick, and treating illness is a responsible, ethical part of animal care. With the use of FDA-regulated antibiotics, Sanderson Farms is able to treat their chickens in a responsible manner while maintaining the health and well-being of the flock.
- The FDA and the USDA strictly regulate the small percentage of permitted antibiotics used in poultry production. Under the FDA’s Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD), all approved antibiotics are administered to chickens under the supervision and prescription of licensed veterinarians.

ANTIBIOTICS AND HUMANS

- Due to strict FDA regulations, no antibiotics are ever present in the animal’s system by the time it enters the food chain. Regardless of what a label may say, all chicken available to buy at the grocery store is “antibiotic-free.”
- Chicken products labeled as “raised without antibiotics” or “no antibiotics ever” have not been proven to be healthier or safer than those that are not. All chicken is antibiotic free.

“ALL CHICKEN AVAILABLE TO BUY AT THE GROCERY STORE IS “ANTIBIOTIC-FREE.””

- According to the National Chicken Council, the majority of antibiotics used in poultry production are not used in human medicine and, therefore, do not present a threat of creating resistance in humans. Furthermore, the amount of antibiotics used to maintain flock health is a very small percentage. In fact, on a body weight basis, humans consume 10 times more antibiotics per body weight than farm animals.
- There is concern that the antibiotics given to animals are the same antibiotics administered to humans, and if we consume those animals that are treated with antibiotics, we may develop resistance to those antibiotics. According to the American Meat Institute, the majority of antibiotics used in agriculture are either used in animals or in people, but not both.
- While Sanderson Farms recognizes that antibiotic resistance is an important issue that should be taken seriously, many experts agree the issue is more closely linked to the overuse and over-prescription of human antibiotics by the medical field. In fact, antibiotic-resistant bacteria is more likely to be found in medical institutions, such as hospitals and nursing homes, than in the meat you consume.

“ HUMANS CONSUME 10 TIMES MORE ANTIBIOTICS PER BODY WEIGHT THAN FARM ANIMALS. ”

HORMONES

- In the 1950s, the FDA banned hormone use for growth promotion in the production of poultry.
- All chicken available for purchase at your local grocery store is free of added hormones.
- The increased growth in chickens over the years is due to the advancements in poultry nutrition, health and genetics. It is not due to the use of added hormones, as they are strictly prohibited for use in poultry production.

CHICKEN TREATMENT

- There is a common myth that conventionally raised chickens are raised on factory farms where they are overcrowded and have minimal care. The reality is, conventionally raised chickens are raised on family farms with veterinary oversight. The farmers and veterinarians work very hard to provide the best possible care using science-based guidelines provided and supported by the National Chicken Council, animal care experts and others who have vast experience in raising animals and producing food.



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- Chicken feed consists mostly of corn and soybean meal, balanced with added vitamins and nutrients. Sanderson Farms has a full staff of in-house nutritionists that ensure the diet of their chickens contains all the requirements necessary to grow healthy, high-quality poultry.
- Despite common consumer misconception, chickens are not raised in cages. They are housed in large, open structures called “grow out houses,” which provide a comfortable, clean environment, as well as protection from outside predators and potential diseases.
- There is a common myth that the “crowded” environment in which chickens are raised contributes to the need for antibiotics. Regardless of where chickens are raised, they are still capable of becoming ill. Sanderson Farms’ chickens are actually raised in large, open structures that are well equipped with systems to steadily provide feed and water to the birds, as well as carefully control lighting and fresh air flow to avoid any undue stress.

“REGARDLESS OF WHERE CHICKENS ARE RAISED, THEY ARE STILL CAPABLE OF BECOMING ILL.”

CHICKEN INSPECTION

- The USDA is responsible for performing residue testing in all USDA label inspected meat at the point of liquidation. Under the U.S. National Residue Program (NRP), the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) samples meat, poultry, and egg product for antibiotic residue. According to statistics compiled by the NRP and administered by FSIS since 2009, no violative antibiotic residues have been found in poultry meat.
- Additionally, under the “Federal Meat Inspection Act” and the “Poultry Products Inspection Act,” FSIS inspects all poultry imported and exported, and certifies all products before they enter the supply chain.
- All chicken products labeled as USDA inspected must meet or exceed food safety standards set forth by FSIS in order to reach American consumers. Federal inspectors are present at all times during operation in USDA inspected chicken processing plants, and inspectors have the authority to halt production for food safety violations.



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