

TO: All Interested Parties
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: April 20, 2015
RE: Findings from a Survey on the Use of Antibiotics in Food Animals in California

In our new survey among California residents, we find a substantial amount of concern about the use of antibiotics in meat and poultry production and a very strong sense that this is an area that deserves government oversight and regulation. Indeed, **a large majority of Californians support the State taking steps on its own to fill in gaps that exist in federal regulation in this area.** And, importantly, concern about antibiotics use and support for oversight are not limited to any one component of the electorate—they cross age, economic, and partisan lines. This memorandum outlines the key findings that emerge from our research.

- **The vast majority of Californians see the decreasing effectiveness of antibiotics and overuse of antibiotics in the food supply as problems.** Fully 81% of respondents say “antibiotics becoming less effective in treating disease” is at least somewhat of a problem, and 76% say this of “overuse of antibiotics in our food supply.” In each case, these include large proportions of respondents who characterize these as “big” problems—52% in the case of effectiveness, and 47% in the case of overuse.
- **Californians are highly concerned about the routine use of antibiotics in the production of their meat and poultry.** Four in five (80%) residents say that they would have major concerns (44%) or some concerns (36%) if they knew the meat and poultry they buy in the store were routinely fed antibiotics. Women are particularly worried about this (88% have major or some concerns), though the vast majority of men are concerned as well (71%).
- **Given these points, there is little surprise that Californians say that government oversight is warranted.** Eighty-four percent (84%) of residents believe it is important to have government oversight and regulation of antibiotics use in meat and poultry production, including a majority (53%) who say this is *very* important. Only 14% say this is not important.
 - There is substantial partisan agreement on this point—92% of registered Democrats, 86% of respondents who decline to state (DTS) a party, and 70% of registered Republicans believe government regulation is important.
 - Residents of the three Northern Central Valley counties where we polled are similarly in agreement: 77% in Sacramento County, 87% in San Joaquin County, and 85% in Yolo County say government oversight is important.

- **Two in three Californians favor the state taking action on its own to tighten use of antibiotics in meat and poultry production.** Survey respondents were informed that the federal government allows large-scale meat and poultry producers to feed antibiotics to animals nearly every day, even if animals are not sick. With this information in mind, 67% say they favor passage of a law that would prevent this practice in California, including 47% who *strongly* favor this. By comparison, 24% oppose the state passing such a law, including just 13% who strongly oppose it.
 - Again, there is majority support across partisan lines, with 73% of Democrats, 70% of DTS respondents, and 53% of Republicans in favor.
 - And also again, the results in the three Northern Central Valley counties are right in line with those statewide: 66% in Sacramento County, 60% in San Joaquin County, and 72% in Yolo County say they favor such a law.
 - While majorities of respondents across the board favor this, we would note that support is especially high among women (70%), Latinos (77%), and those under age 35 (80%).

- **Residents are even more adamant that California should collect data on antibiotics use in meat and poultry production.** After learning that California does not collect data on how much, when, or how antibiotics are given to animals, 80% of respondents say that the state should collect this data; this includes two-thirds (66%) who *strongly* feel this data should be collected. In a sign of how widespread this belief is, even a majority (51%) of respondents who are not especially concerned about antibiotics use in meat and poultry say that data about how antibiotics are used should be collected.

- **Californians are overwhelmingly willing to pay more for their meat and poultry in order to limit the use of antibiotics in the food supply.** Seventy-three percent (73%) say it would be “worth it” to pay between 1% and 3% more for meat and poultry to ensure that antibiotics are used only when animals are sick or to prevent the spread of disease.
 - Importantly, this willingness to pay more is nearly as high among those with household incomes under \$50,000 (70% worth it) as it is among those with incomes of \$50,000 to \$100,000 (76%) and those in households with incomes in excess of \$100,000 (81%).
 - Two in three (65%) seniors say that this kind of price increase would be worth it, an important finding given that seniors tend to be particularly sensitive to small changes in daily expenses, such as food prices.

- **Californians strongly endorse their members of the legislature voting in favor of a law that would tighten antibiotics use in California meat and poultry operations.** Three in four (75%) say they would have a favorable reaction if their members of the legislature voted in favor of such a law; 14% would be neutral, and just 10% would have an unfavorable reaction.

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- Eighty percent (80%) of politically important DTS respondents say they would have a favorable reaction (including 50% whose reaction would be *very favorable*), as do 81% of Democrats and 61% of Republicans.

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- Residents in the three Northern Central Valley counties also would endorse this vote by their members: 69% in Sacramento County say their reaction would be favorable, as do 60% in San Joaquin County and 72% in Yolo County.

The findings cited in this memorandum come from a survey conducted by Hart Research Associates on behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Hart surveyed a representative cross section of 600 likely 2016 voters across California via landline and cell phone. Additional interviews were conducted in Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Yolo Counties (for a total of 125 in each) so as to have sufficient data to analyze in those areas. Interviews were conducted from April 9 to 12, 2015. The margins of error are ± 4.0 percentage points for the full statewide sample (with higher tolerances for demographic subgroups) and ± 8.8 percentage points in each of the three counties.