Hold the Antibiotics: McDonald’s

McDonald’s raises the bar for responsible antibiotic use in beef

The Big Mac is taking a big bite out of the overuse of antibiotics.

In December, McDonald’s released a new policy to restrict medically important antibiotics in its beef supply chain. It will monitor antibiotic use in its top 10 global beef sourcing markets and set reduction targets by the end of 2020.

Whether you eat at McDonald’s or not, this is an important step forward for public health. We rely on antibiotics to treat life-threatening infections and to ensure that surgery, chemotherapy and other medical procedures are safe. But the overuse of antibiotics is leading to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, called “superbugs,” that are now shaking the foundations of modern medicine.

“The Golden Arches just raised the bar for responsible antibiotic use in meat production,” said Matt Wellington, director of our national Stop the Overuse of Antibiotics campaign. “McDonald’s new commitment is a promising step forward that will help preserve antibiotics for the future, and that’s something we should all be happy about.”

Misuse of antibiotics is one of the biggest threats to global health today

While overuse in medical settings is a factor in the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, industrialized livestock operations—like the ones that supply McDonald’s beef—play an outsized role in this looming public health threat.

A staggering 70 percent of medically important antibiotics are sold for use in livestock and poultry operations here in the United States. These drugs are routinely given to animals to help them survive crowded, stressful and unsanitary conditions, regardless of whether the animals are actually sick.

The stakes couldn’t be higher. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conservatively estimates that at least 2 million Americans are sickened and 23,000 die each year as a direct result of antibiotic-resistant infections. However, recent estimates suggest more than 150,000 Americans died of antibiotic-resistant infections in 2010.

The World Health Organization has called antibiotic resistance “one of the biggest threats to global health, food security and development today.”

Commitments from McDonald’s, KFC, Subway and more

We shouldn’t allow the meat industry to misuse our life-saving medicines just to make cows a little fatter and burgers a little cheaper.

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GET THE LEAD OUT

You can make a difference for kids with our toolkit to get the lead out of schools

If you want to prevent lead poisoning, the best solution is simple: Get the lead out of anywhere that people, especially children, can be exposed to it.

That’s why on Oct. 22, in honor of Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, MASSPIRG Education Fund partnered with our national network to release a new and improved toolkit to get the lead out of schools’ drinking water.

“At a time when we have driverless cars and 3D printers, we shouldn’t tolerate a system that delivers lead-laden water to anyone, let alone our children,” said Deirdre Cummings, consumer program director for MASSPIRG Education Fund. “Luckily, this is one problem we know how to fix. We just need to do it.”

Whether you’re a parent, teacher or concerned citizen, you can use our toolkit to help get the lead out of your local schools. The kit provides a factsheet, video, templates for action materials, and links to additional resources.

On Sept. 7, 2018—the one year anniversary of the public announcement of the Equifax data breach—MASSPIRG Education Fund released a report detailing the government’s failure to hold the company accountable and offering tips for consumers to protect themselves. The report also concludes that both oversight and financial consequences are needed to prevent future large-scale breaches.

“We’re particularly proud of this report, where we’ve put together tips for preventing, detecting and resolving different types of identity theft and fraud, all in one place,” said Mike Litt, our national consumer campaign director. Visit bit.ly/EquifaxBreachOneYearLater to read the full report.

MASSPIRG’s Consumer Watchdog program will continue to protect consumers and alert them to the tools they need to protect themselves from identity thieves.

21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION

‘A big step in the right direction’: Regional public transportation gets a boost

They don’t get as much attention as the Greater Boston’s MBTA system, but they deliver more than 32 million rides a year—and now they’re getting an infusion of new funds, thanks in part to MASSPIRG advocacy.

On July 26, Gov. Charlie Baker signed a budget providing $88 million in funding for the state’s Regional Transit Authorities, which provide a lifeline for people living in Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, New Bedford and towns in between. The funds will help avert service cuts on bus routes throughout the state.

“This is a big step in the right direction, but is just the beginning,” said MASSPIRG Staff Attorney Matt Casale. “Moving forward, we need to expand and streamline public transit throughout the Commonwealth.”

MASSPIRG was joined by more than 20 organizations in signing a letter to Gov. Baker, urging him to approve the funding.

PIRG CONSUMER WATCHDOG

One year after Equifax data breach, here’s everything you need to know

One year after announcing the biggest data breach in history, Equifax still hasn’t been held accountable or provided the information and tools consumers need to adequately protect themselves. That’s why MASSPIRG is stepping in.

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McDonald’s raises the bar for responsible antibiotic use in beef

For years, MASSPIRG and our national network have called on major restaurants, including McDonald’s, to take action. And our advocacy helped persuade McDonald’s to stop serving chicken raised on our life-saving medicines in 2015—a commitment that helped push chicken supplier Tyson Foods to start raising its chickens without routine antibiotics.

KFC, Subway and other restaurants and suppliers quickly followed suit, and we estimate that soon nearly half of all chicken in this country will be raised without the routine use of medically important antibiotics.

McDonald’s newest commitment to reduce the routine use of medically important antibiotics in its beef supply is the culmination of over a year’s work by MASSPIRG and our coalition partners.

More than 80 international stakeholders, including health, environmental and consumer groups, called on McDonald’s to act. We organized top medical professionals across the country to speak out about the health risks, and our national network delivered more than 150,000 petition signatures to McDonald’s headquarters during its annual shareholder meeting.

Setting off a chain reaction

In October 2018, MASSPIRG Education Fund held an event outside of McDonald’s headquarters to release the collaborative “Chain Reaction IV” report grading the top 25 U.S. burger chains on their antibiotics policies.

McDonald’s received an “F” in the report, and later responded that the company would release a global antibiotics policy for its beef by the end of the year.

Today, we’re pleased that McDonald’s followed through on its pledge to take the next step in restricting antibiotics use. As the largest purchaser of beef in the U.S., McDonald’s action could spark an industry-wide change as the beef industry will now have to meet McDonald’s—and consumers’—demands to reduce the routine use of antibiotics in beef.

With McDonald’s taking an important step in the right direction, MASSPIRG will continue to work with the burger chain that’s served billions to set strong reduction targets by the end of 2020.

“Consumers called on McDonald’s to hold the antibiotics,” said Matt. “Its response shows progress, and we look forward to seeing the company continue to use its size for good when it comes to preserving life-saving antibiotics.”

By Matt Wellington, director
Campaign to Stop the Overuse of Antibiotics

Above: Approximately 70 percent of medically important antibiotics sold in the U.S. are intended for use in livestock and poultry.

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Investments in mutual funds carry risks and investors may lose principal value. You should carefully consider the Funds’ investment objectives, risk, charges, and expenses before investing. To obtain a Prospectus that contains this and other information about the Funds, please visit www.greencentury.com, email info@greencentury.com, or call 1-800-334-2136. Please read the Prospectus carefully before investing. Distributor: UMB Distribution Services, LLC, 8/19.
Ban Roundup

Jury finds Monsanto’s Roundup responsible for man’s terminal cancer

Monsanto has been held accountable for hiding the health risks of Roundup in a California courtroom.

In August 2018, a jury awarded millions in damages to Dewayne Johnson, a former school groundskeeper who claimed his terminal non-Hodgkin lymphoma was caused by years of using the herbicide Roundup. Twenty-six million pounds of Roundup are sprayed on school grounds, parks and gardens every year, and Johnson’s case was the first to go to trial of more than 800 patients suing Monsanto.

“I would never have sprayed that product on school grounds or around people if I knew it would cause harm,” Johnson testified. His lawyer said, “We were finally able to show the jury the secret, internal Monsanto documents proving that Monsanto has known for decades that Roundup could cause cancer.”

As the evidence against Roundup piles up, MASSPIRG is working to protect our public health by banning the herbicide in Massachusetts.

TOP STORY:
McDonald’s will stop serving beef and pork raised on the routine use of antibiotics
McDonald’s recent commitment could spark an industry-wide change in the way we raise our food and help preserve our life-saving antibiotics for the future.

Thanks to you

Dear MASSPIRG member,

This winter, MASSPIRG and our national network celebrated when McDonald’s announced it would cut routine antibiotic use in its beef supply chain. It’s a welcome victory for public health and it wouldn’t have been possible without the support of members like you.

Thank you,

Janet Domenitz
Executive Director
info@masspirg.org