

FDA reports 38% decline in animal antibiotic sales since 2015, easing public health concerns

For several years, an area of focus for those of us involved in farm animal care has been a commitment to the responsible use of antibiotics. Some called it window dressing. They said the commitments made by farmers, veterinarians and the animal health community to optimize the use of antibiotics on the farm would have little impact. Today, evidence suggests otherwise.

[Editor's note: Author [Leah Dorman](#) has been a veterinarian for more than 20 years.]

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently released a report summarizing the sales of medically important antibiotics for agricultural use in 2018. There was a 21 percent decrease in sales from 2009, the first year of reported sales. The decline is even more significant when compared with 2015 – a 38 percent decrease according to the FDA report. That doesn't sound like window dressing to me.

As we look at antibiotics sold year over year, there may be years where there are more or less, depending on the illnesses that can come and go, weather patterns, and changes in livestock populations. As I look to analyze whether the industry is making good on its commitment, my eye is firmly on continuous improvement over time, focusing on [antibiotic stewardship](#) through responsible use while maintaining animal health and well-being.

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