



Vol. 3; No. 4

July 17, 2018

### **Animals Raised Without Antibiotics: Good for Animal Health and Welfare?**

The overall well-being of animals raised for food is both an ethical obligation and a critical component of providing a safe food supply. In recent years, however, the use of antibiotics for maintaining animal health has come under scrutiny due to rising fears of antibiotic resistance. Sparked by consumer demand, U.S. producers, restaurants, and grocers have begun prioritizing providing protein from animals that have not received antibiotics, while concerns within the animal health industry have grown that these practices might be negatively impacting animal health and welfare.

That's where the Institute for Feed Education and Research and its partners came into play. In 2017, IFEEDER underwrote a study with the Animal Agriculture Alliance, Health for Animals, National Corn Growers Association, American Association of Bovine Practitioners, National Pork Board, National Pork Producers Council and Richard Sellers to explore the impacts that removing antibiotics from animal production would have on animal health and welfare, food safety, consumer demand and the cost of food production.

Conducted by Dr. Randall Singer, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Minnesota, the study solicited responses from over 565 veterinarians, producers and other stakeholders involved directly in raising broilers, turkeys, swine, and beef or dairy cattle. Across all surveyed commodities, the main reasons the experts gave for raising animals without antibiotics (RWA) were market driven.

Below are a few key findings from the study:

- Concerns for animal health and welfare were the most commonly cited reasons for not participating in RWA production systems.
- A majority of the veterinary and producer respondents across all animal commodities indicated that RWA leads to decreased production efficiency and works against animal health and welfare.
- However, they believed there was a disconnect between retail, restaurant and food service company leadership beliefs about how RWA policies would improve animal health and welfare, compared to their actual impacts, which they cited as: increased morbidity, mortality and culling rates.

- Respondents indicated that RWA programs would slightly, to significantly, increase the cost of production, while the demand for these products would only slightly increase or remain unchanged.

In summary, many respondents felt that there are times when the RWA label has taken priority over animal health and welfare. In general, they felt that there was a need for increased auditing and assessment of animal health and welfare in RWA systems to ensure these policies only have animals' best interests at heart.

In the coming months, IFEEDER will be working to share these results with the agriculture industry so that it can start to hold more meaningful conversations about animal welfare and sustainability with customers.

The Singer study on Animals raised without Antibiotics can be found at the Animal Agriculture Alliance at [animalagalliance.org](http://animalagalliance.org).

### **IFEEDER Welcomes Robert Cooper**

IFEEDER is pleased to [announce](#) Robert Cooper as its new executive director. Cooper will provide leadership for IFEEDER in crafting and implementing the overall strategic direction for the institute. He will develop and manage fundraising and donor stewardship programs and maintain relationships with current and future donors. He will also work closely with IFEEDER's Board of Trustees and other committees to carry out key research and education projects and with the American Feed Industry Association's communications team to share the institute's mission and message in various communications to both donors and the public.



Cooper joined IFEEDER from the University of Georgia's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, where he served as assistant to the dean for external relations. Cooper has also worked with the National FFA Foundation and the Maryland 4-H Foundation.

Cooper holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Delaware. He can be reached at [rcooper@afia.org](mailto:rcooper@afia.org) or (703) 650-0141.

### **Donate Today!**

For every \$1 IFEEDER invests in research and education projects, \$5 is leveraged from other sources. All donations go directly toward projects, as IFEEDER's administrative costs are borne by AFIA, so your donations go even further. Help us maximize our reach by donating today! Simply select "[Donate](#)" at the top of [ifeeder.org](http://ifeeder.org) and select whether you would like to donate via check, pledge or credit

card. For questions, contact [Bridget Rinker](#), AFIA's development assistant, at (703) 558-3577.