May 2017

**Chicken Farmers of Canada’s Antimicrobial Use Strategy Moves Forward**

At its May board meeting, Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC) made the decision to revise its antimicrobial use (AMU) strategy. CFC Directors agreed to eliminate the preventive use of Category II antibiotics by the end of 2018. In addition, they established a goal to eliminate the preventive use of Category III antibiotics by the end of 2020, contingent on a re-assessment at the end of 2019.

CFC appreciates and is committed to the significant amount of work and collaboration that will be required to accomplish this revised strategy. The objective of this announcement is to encourage all stakeholders to become actively engaged and participate in the successful implementation of this strategy.

This strategy builds on CFC’s objective of eliminating the preventative use of antibiotics of human importance and has been guided by CFC’s comprehensive AMU strategy that involves reduction, surveillance, education and research. Industry’s leadership on AMU reduction was first demonstrated in May 2014 when the preventive use of Category I antibiotics was eliminated.

By implementing this strategy, CFC is taking a proactive stance to make sure that our industry can keep using antibiotics for treatment purposes. CFC supports the responsible use of antibiotics and believes that antibiotics are an important tool for the agriculture sector to maintain animal health and welfare, and to ensure a safe food supply.

The strategy is based on the recommendations of an industry AMU reduction working group that CFC initiated in 2015. Their recommendations were to eliminate the preventive use of Category II’s by the end of 2018, and to eliminate the preventive use of Category III antibiotics; however, a date was not established for Category III’s as there were a number of outstanding issues, such as the availability of properly labelled feed alternatives, which remained to be solved.

In considering these recommendations in July 2016, CFC Directors were also concerned about the outstanding issues and decided not to implement the working group recommendation, but to continue with the ban on preventative use of Category I’s, and to conduct a re-assessment of further elimination at a later date. The decision in May was taken on the basis of progress on some of the outstanding issues, including the anticipation of a successful new registration process for feed alternatives, as well as the
increasing concern that actions taken by retail and foodservice companies in the absence of an industry strategy might limit the options of the industry to determine how best to proceed.

The revised strategy continues to support the responsible use of antibiotics to provide continued confidence to customers, consumers and government. CFC’s strategy has evolved to the following:

» Maintain the use of ionophores and chemical coccidiostats for preventive use
» Maintain the use of antibiotics of human importance for therapeutic purposes
» Eliminate the preventive use of Category II antibiotics by the end of 2018
» Establish a goal to eliminate the preventive use of Category III antibiotics by the end of 2020, contingent on a re-assessment at the end of 2019 of industry’s readiness for such a change

This is not a “Raised without the use of antibiotics” strategy. A key element of the strategy is to maintain the use of ionophores (those antimicrobials not used in human medicine) and chemical coccidiostats, along with antibiotics for therapeutic purposes to maintain the health and welfare of birds. Antibiotics will continue to play an important role in the health and welfare of birds in the Canadian chicken industry.

While some stakeholders would have liked a more firm commitment on the elimination of Category III antibiotics, this strategy represents the best process to meet the goal of eliminating the preventive use of antibiotics of human importance. Establishing the 2020 goal is important so as to be transparent with industry and consumers about the direction of the reduction strategy, and to allow time for industry to measure the impacts. The phase-in period will allow the industry to assess the impacts on animal health, welfare and production, and to adapt to the elimination of these uses.

There is increasing focus on the use of antibiotics in agriculture, both internationally through the World Health Organization and domestically through the federal government’s action plan on antimicrobial resistance and use. This strategy is an important step to remove the Canadian chicken industry from the conversation and to solidify chicken as a healthy choice in the eyes of consumers.

In the coming months, engagement will be needed from different stakeholders to focus on the key issues that will determine the strategy’s success. These include 1) finalizing the approval process for antibiotic alternatives, 2) the sharing of economic costs, 3) investing in research to provide alternative solutions, 4) solidifying the definitions of preventive and therapeutic use under different production scenarios, 5) developing strategies to ensure chick quality, and 6) working on enforcement and surveillance via CFC’s On-Farm Food Safety Assurance Program.

Success will not be possible without the active participation of all industry value chain members and CFC strongly encourages all of you to be fully engaged in the process to develop an implementation strategy in order to promote a strong, unified Canadian chicken industry.