



Many grocery chains are failing to stop antibiotic overuse in their private label meat supply chains, a practice that spurs the development of dangerous drug-resistant superbugs. Credit: USDA via Flickr, CC BY 2.0

## STOP THE OVERUSE OF ANTIBIOTICS

# Why consider buying meat raised without antibiotics?

Authored by Matt Wellington, director of PIRG's public health campaigns

If you buy meat at the supermarket, you want to trust that whichever product you choose has been sourced in a way that doesn't put the health of your family or your community at risk.

But there's a good chance the meat at your local supermarket came from a factory farm that routinely gives medically important antibiotics to animals that aren't even sick. That's a huge threat to the efficacy of our lifesaving medicines, and therefore our health. Here's why:

- Every time we use antibiotics to kill off bacteria, we roll the dice that some of that bacteria will evolve to evade the medicine targeting them.
- If and when the mutant bacteria survive and reproduce, they can become "super-

bugs"—a health threat that is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to treat with antibiotics.

- Every year, as many as 162,000 Americans die from infections caused by drug-resistant bacteria.

That's why it's absurd that rampant overuse of antibiotics is still the status quo on many factory farms. It contributes to the growth and spread of these superbugs.

### Our supermarkets aren't making the grade

"Superbugs in Stock," an Oct. 13 report co-authored by our research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund and several members of the Antibiotics Off the Menu coalition, recently



CoPIRG and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.

Thanks  
for making it  
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## ANTIBIOTIC OVERUSE CONT.

Cher Johnson, The Public Interest Network

Antibiotic Use Policies and Practices	
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F	Kroger Walmart ALDI TRADER JOE'S H-E-B Albertsons Publix Wakefern

*Of the 12 largest grocery chains in the U.S., the majority were found to be failing to meaningfully address the issue of antibiotic overuse by their meat suppliers—with 8 of the 12 receiving “F” grades.*

graded the top grocery stores in the United States on whether they’re acting to eliminate the routine use of antibiotics in their private label meat supplies.

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We shouldn’t throw away our life-saving medicines to produce a slightly cheaper pork chop or hamburger.

Supermarkets can impact the meat industry in two ways: by eliminating the routine use of antibiotics in their private label meat (i.e. what they they package and sell directly), and by educating consumers about which products are made without routine use of antibiotics so we can all make better-informed decisions before the check-out line.

Everyday consumers, too, can bring about change: By leveraging our wallets to buy only meat raised without the routine use of antibiotics, and by raising our voices to hold the stores we buy from accountable.

### These companies need to step up

From grocery stores to restaurant chains to leaders in the meat industry, PIRG is working to convince major companies to sell meat raised without the routine use of medically important antibiotics. And we’ve made big progress.

We helped convince fast food giants Wendy’s, Subway and KFC to commit to no longer serving meat raised with antibiotic overuse. And

we won a commitment from chicken producer Tyson to end the overuse of medically-important antibiotics in its supply chain.

Now, PIRG staff and members are encouraging grocery chains to step up and implement policies to stop the overuse of our life-saving medicines.

The stakes? Without more action, the global death toll for drug-resistant superbugs could be up to 10 million annually by 2050.

We can stop needlessly wasting our most important medicines—and keep them effective for the humans and animals that need them the most.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### TOXIC THREATS

#### A chance to stop toxic ‘forever chemicals’ from being dumped into our waterways

Certain chemicals used in the manufacture of everyday items such as rain jackets, fast food wrappers and non-stick cookware have been linked to serious health issues, including cancer. So why are they still allowed to be dumped into our waterways?

On Nov. 4, PIRG and our national research partner U.S. PIRG Education Fund sent a letter urging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to act to reduce near-term discharges of these chemicals, called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS, into America’s waterways. Also known as “forever chemicals,” PFAS are highly persistent in the environment, do not break down naturally, and build up in the environment and our bodies over time.

“When it comes to PFAS pollution, too little has been done to protect our communities for too long,” said PIRG Zero Out Toxics Advocate Emily Rogers. “The EPA should act quickly to use the tools provided by the Clean Water Act and other existing regulations to stop the flow of PFAS pollution into our nation’s waters and ensure that polluters bear the costs of preventing and cleaning up PFAS contamination.”

### OUR MISSION

When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, PIRG speaks up and takes action. We uncover threats to public health and well-being and fight to end them, using the time-tested tools of investigative research, media exposes, grassroots organizing, advocacy and litigation. PIRG’s mission is to deliver persistent, results oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy and fosters responsive democratic government.

**ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

**EPA doubling electric school bus grants due to overwhelming demand**

School buses are the most common form of public transportation in the United States. Every day, 480,000 of them carry up to half of America’s children to school and back.

On Sept. 29, after overwhelming demand for the first round of funding from the Clean School Bus Program (provided in the bipartisan infrastructure package that PIRG helped pass in the fall of 2021), the EPA announced it would nearly double the funding awarded for clean school buses in 2022.

Currently, fewer than 1% of the nation’s school buses are powered by electricity, but with advances in electric bus technology, growing understanding of the benefits of electrification, and now a fresh influx of federal money, electric school buses are becoming an increasingly viable option for school districts—and communities across the country are catching on.

Assisting school districts in moving away from diesel powered buses in favor of other cleaner sources will provide a variety of environmental and public health benefits.

**PIRG CONSUMER WATCHDOG**  
**Report finds recalled toys still being sold online**

While the vast majority of toys on the market are safe thanks to decades of policy and regulatory action, parents and caregivers should be aware there is still some trouble in toyland.

CoPIRG Foundation’s 37th annual Trouble in Toyland report found 11 types of recalled toys—containing hidden threats such as choking hazards, toxic chemical additives, or a tendency to break into dangerously sharp pieces—available for purchase online. CoPIRG Executive Director Danny Katz provided parents and caregivers with guidance on how to avoid these recalled toys in advance of the gift-giving season.

“Just because a toy is for sale, that doesn’t mean it’s safe,” said Danny. “While parents



ABC7 Washington, D.C.

should always thoroughly inspect a new toy before giving it to their child, it’s also crucial that toy manufacturers, sellers and regulators work together to prevent hazardous toys from being sold.”

*PIRG Consumer Watchdog Teresa Murray is a leading voice for consumers in Colorado and across the country, alerting the public to threats to our safety and our finances such as robotext scam messages and recalled toys available online.*

A new CoPIRG-backed law takes effect this year that gives law enforcement and regulators more tools to find and stop unsafe, counterfeit toys and other products from reaching Colorado consumers.

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# CoPIRG

CITIZEN AGENDA • WINTER 2023

## 50 YEARS

CoPIRG and our national network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change. The Public Interest Network operates and supports organizations committed to a shared vision of a better world and a strategic approach to social change.

### BEYOND PLASTIC

# Whole Foods should take wasteful single-use plastic packaging off its shelves

Whole Foods claims that its mission is to “nourish people and the planet,” so why does so much of its food come packaged in layers and layers of throw-away single-use plastic?

Far from nourishing us, this plastic pollutes our communities and threatens our health. And according to a survey of 50 companies, Whole Foods’ plastic policies are among the worst. The company earned an “F,” putting it behind other major retailers such as Walmart and Kroger.

Together with tens of thousands of citizen advocates like you, we’re urging the company to spark an industry-wide change and make a bold, time-bound commitment to reducing its plastic footprint.



*It’s hard to cut back on single-use plastic in our day-to-day lives in large part because grocery stores simply don’t give us the chance.*

“Over 91% of plastic is never recycled, even though so many of us carefully sort plastic into the recycling bin,” said PIRG Environment Campaigns Director Matt Casale. “Clearly, we need less plastic to enter our lives in the first place—and what better place to start than the grocery store?”

### FEATURED STAFF



Kimball Nelson

**Danny Katz:** *Danny directs the operations of CoPIRG and is a leading voice in Denver and across the state on issues such as improving transportation, defending consumers and getting big money out of our elections. He also serves on the Colorado Department of Transportation’s Efficiency and Accountability Committee, as well as the Transit and Rail Advisory Committee, and is a founding member of the Financial Equity Coalition.*

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