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Opinion: Rancher questions linking farms to 'superbugs'

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Trade journal Beef Magazine is taking issue with recent articles in two popular women's magazines for blaming antibiotic resistant bacteria on farmers. [Author Amanda Radke defended the safety of food processing](#) and questioned why only producers were suspect.

"While these articles point out a growing problem we can't deny – antibiotic-resistant bacteria, the link to animal agriculture isn't clear. Sure, humans and animals use similar medicines, like penicillin for example, but ranchers use antibiotics judiciously to prevent the spread of disease and to maintain optimal health in their animals."

Radke cited two articles, including Self Magazine's "[The dangerous superbugs hiding in your dinner.](#)" which describes the experience of a woman who was sick for months after eating undercooked chicken containing antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The article calls the bacteria "farm-bred superbugs," and mentions no other possible culprit for the illness than the farm.

Redbook's article, "[How farms contribute to superbugs.](#)" is accompanied by an eye-catching graphic that begins with a drawing of a cow, a hog, and two chickens with arrows down to a drawing of a person in a hospital bed. Just as in Self Magazine, no mention is made in the graphic of other possible sources of bacteria.

The women's magazine articles are factually accurate. [As Harvest has previously reported](#), research has shown that antibiotic use in livestock can lead to the creation of superbugs, and that it is possible for superbugs in livestock to transfer to humans.

But the author of the Beef Daily blog post thinks laying the blame on farmers is going too far. In a comment below her post, Radke points to another cause of superbugs: the overuse of antibiotics and disinfectants among humans.

"I think it's important to ask ourselves as producers, are we responsible? Are we using antibiotics judiciously? Are we putting consumers at risk? And, if so, maybe we need to freshen up on our BQA protocols and do a better job. But, for the most part, I believe animal agriculture does a great job. And, it is the overuse of prescription meds, hand sanitizers, disinfectants, etc. in the human population that is causing problems."

RECOMMENDED READING

- Study: superbug jumping from livestock to humans
- Opinion: "The Folly of Big Agriculture"
- Opinion: "No sugarcoating this giveaway"
- Opinion: Food Safety on Hold
- Opinion: "Hot doggin' it"

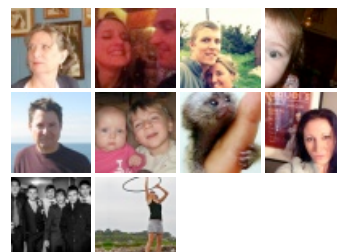
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