

# START the Conversation

Let's Talk About  
Animal Agriculture

Developed by



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU  
FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURE

## Antibiotics

**What are they used for?** 87% of antibiotic use in farm animals is to treat and prevent disease and bacterial infection. 13% of antibiotic use is to promote lean muscle production. Antibiotics are a critical tool farmers and ranchers use to keep animals healthy. Veterinarians work with farmers and ranchers to use antibiotics in a manner that provides customers with safe food.<sup>1</sup>

**Can animals be raised without the use of antibiotics?** Some producers raise livestock without using antibiotics, but they must have alternate treatments plans for livestock that become sick.

### Farmer Spotlight:



#### Greg and Contessa Harris, KY

We raise beef cattle, tobacco and produce our own hay and corn for feed. We only use antibiotics in our livestock to help them overcome illness or disease. Antibiotics are only used if necessary and not given to all animals.

### Farmer Spotlight:



#### Tim and Emily Zweber, MN

Just like all farmers, animal welfare is our number one concern. As organic dairy farmers, we use a variety of natural remedies to help animals that fall ill. When natural solutions do not work we are required to use the most humane treatment possible, which may include antibiotics. If an animal is treated with an antibiotic, she is no longer considered organic and must leave our herd.

## Nutrition

### Could we grow more food where animals and animal feed are raised?

Different places in the country, based on soil type, temperature and other weather factors, are able to grow different things. Cattle, on the other hand, can be raised on land that has no value for crop production.

**So what about protein?** Protein is needed by our bodies to build muscle. We need about 8 grams of protein for every 20 pounds of body weight to keep our muscles from breaking down. If we skip protein,

we risk hurting our immune system and respiratory system, weakening our heart, and we increase the risk of death.<sup>2</sup>

## Animal Care

**Why do farmers care for animals?** For farmers and ranchers, taking care of animals just makes sense. Healthy animals mean healthy food for everyone, including farmers and their families.

**How are decisions made about animal care?** Quality Assurance programs at the national and state levels provide farmers and ranch-

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### Farmer Spotlight:



#### Rodney and Cindy Wiese, NE

We have a hog finishing operation. We provide a building that always offers proper feed, water and ventilation to promote growth. The curtains on the building are adjusted to maintain a proper temperature to keep the hogs comfortable so they will continue to gain.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Antibiotics: Questions and Answers. (n.d.). *Food Dialogues: Farmers & Ranchers Committed to Continuous Improvement of How We Grow & Raise Food*. Retrieved May 28, 2014, from <http://www.fooddialogues.com/foodsource/antibiotics>

<sup>2</sup> Protein: Moving Closer to Center Stage. (n.d.). The Nutrition Source. Retrieved June 9, 2014, from <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/protein-full-story/>

ers with guidelines. Standards for animal care should be based on the expertise of veterinarians, farmers, ranchers and animal scientists – people who work with farm animals daily.

**So with animal care standards, more is better – right?** Not necessarily. Animal care standards must be based on data, expert analysis and economic feasibility. Overzealous standards that are not based on sound science can increase the price of food, which hurts families trying to keep food on the table.

## Living Environments

American farmers and ranchers have a variety of approaches to raising livestock – but they have one thing in common, they care about animals and they care about providing a safe, reliable food supply. So why are animals raised in different living environments? Let's go straight to the source.

## Farmer Spotlight:



### Dustin and Harmony Cox, UT

We are blessed to have been able to start our own ranch. We teach our daughters the importance of proper animal care. We believe God created animals for the specific purpose of feeding his children. We also believe that while they are in our care they are to be treated with the utmost respect. Our girls are taught at a very young age how to properly care for our animals. Clean water, nutritious feed, and gentle mannerisms will produce a superior beef product as we strive to fulfill our ever increasingly important job of feeding the families of the world.

## Farmer Spotlight:



### Joey and Tawni Fernandes, CA

We own and operate 3 dairy farms. We are 3rd generation farmers who take pride in how we care for our cattle. We house most of our cows in free stall barns. They are provided cover from the elements and have free access to individual beds that are filled with sand or dry composted manure and rice hulls. Our cows have access to fresh water and are kept cool with fans and water from soakers and misters. Keeping the cows clean dry and comfortable is our principle concern, which results in greater milk production and healthier cows.

## How do I Start the Conversation?

The purpose of this tool is to help provide consumers and producers with information about common topics for discussion. The goal is to encourage conversation, between producers, consumers, and learners of all ages.

### Check out these ideas!

- Reach out to your county or state Farm Bureau to connect with local farmers in your area. Go to [fb.org](http://fb.org) and click on "Farm Bureaus" to find your state website.
- Use this card as a starting point to brainstorm your questions.
- Have this resource available for guests to review in livestock barns at fairs.
- Set up a "Meet a Farmer" booth at your next community event. Use this card to help guest farmers review key topics consumers may have questions about.
- Start a farmer pen-pal program with a local school. Invite classes to send questions to farmers via email or letter. Use this as a guide to help respond to specific questions.
- Set up a "chat station" at a local farmer's market. Invite people to sit down and talk about the things on their mind related to animal agriculture.

### Looking for more information? Want to join the conversation? Check out these resources:

- [www.agfoundation.org](http://www.agfoundation.org) American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture
- [www.agchat.org](http://www.agchat.org) Ag Chat Foundation
- [www.ahi.org](http://www.ahi.org) Animal Health Institute
- [www.fooddialogues.com](http://www.fooddialogues.com) The Food Dialogues

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