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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
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**The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP**  
Secretary of State

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 13 April on behalf of a number of your constituents about antibiotics in farming.

To tackle the global threat posed by antibiotic resistance action must be taken to prevent unnecessary use of antibiotics in both animals and people.

The legislation that controls veterinary medicines and medicated feed within the EU is currently under revision. To reflect the rising threat of antibiotic resistance the new proposed frameworks set out additional controls on antibiotics. This includes a ban on the routine preventative use of antibiotics, including those classified as critically important, something the UK supports. Negotiations on the frameworks are expected to continue until late 2017. There are no plans to significantly revise or amend the UK's regulations until the Commission's work on the review of legislation has been completed.

In animal health, antibiotics should be reserved for when there are signs of clinical disease. However, we also recognise that where high risk of bacterial disease has been identified, preventative use may still be necessary. Such prescribing decisions should be made on a case by case basis, on the clinical judgement of a veterinary surgeon and following consideration of all factors involved.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the farming sector we need to continually review, and optimise, husbandry practices so that we minimise the incidence of disease that would necessitate the use of antibiotics. This will not only reduce the potential risk to humans but also the risk to the development of resistance in bacteria that cause disease in animals.

In addition to the revision of the EU legislation, the UK government commissioned an Independent Review on antibiotic resistance in July 2014. The Prime Minister has made it clear that the UK will take forward the recommendations from the Review, and take an international lead. Some of the recommendations will address the use of antibiotics in agriculture. The final report is due to be published in May 2016.

Thank you again for your letter.

Best wishes,



**Elizabeth Truss MP**  
**Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**