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Arsenic Producer for Animal Feed Suspends Sales
FACT urges continued action to remove all arsenic from animal feeds permanently

Chicago – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced that Alpharma, a division of the pharmaceutical company Pfizer, agreed to temporarily stop selling one of its arsenic-containing products, 3-Nitro, for use in chicken, turkeys and swine. FDA asked the company to take this step after discovering that using the product could lead to inorganic arsenic, a known carcinogen, in the liver of treated chickens.

3-Nitro is widely used by poultry producers to improve growth, create the appearance of healthier color in meat, and is one of multiple chemicals that can be used to help control a parasitic disease in poultry. An estimated 70% of all U.S. chickens raised for meat receive the additive. Neither European poultry producers nor organic producers use 3-Nitro.

The FDA agreed to allow the company to continue selling 3-Nitro for 30 days and stated there was no need to recall meat or chicken livers because the level of carcinogen was low. Since 1958, federal law has prohibited the marketing of products that result in carcinogenic residues in food at any level.

Despite the clear legal authority to withdraw the product from the market, the FDA instead negotiated with the manufacturer and Pfizer decided to suspend sales while the company reviews FDA's data. The FDA did not announce any action on the other two arsenic-containing products that are currently approved for use in pigs and poultry. In addition, the agency did not establish a timeline for officially withdrawing the 3-Nitro approval.

FACT believes this case illustrates the extent to which the pharmaceutical industry controls the FDA. Requesting voluntary, piecemeal action on the part of a company with a financial stake in selling arsenicals will not guarantee public health and safety. The FDA should require the sponsors to immediately withdraw all three arsenic containing additives from the market and promulgate a regulation that would permanently prohibit arsenicals from use in poultry and livestock.

FACT has taken this stance for years. In 2009, FACT supported a petition filed by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and the Center for Food Safety asking the FDA to ban the arsenical roxarsone. We also filed our own petition with the FDA in 2009 requesting that the agency ban the use of poultry litter as cattle feed due in part to the risk posed by arsenicals in the litter.

Food Animal Concerns Trust plays an essential role pushing the FDA to do its job and protect public health. Just last month FACT, along with several allied organizations, filed a lawsuit against the FDA seeking an end to the use of antibiotics in animal feed. The lawsuit states that the FDA has not met its legal responsibility to protect public health. For more information please contact Richard Wood at (773) 525-4952 or visit www.foodanimalconcerns.org.

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