

From Factory Farm to Grass-fed Moneymaker



Free ranging benefits the livestock and the environment at White Oak Pastures.

Photo: White Oak Pastures

by Will Harris
Sustainable Livestock Producer
White Oak Pastures Farm

In 1866, when my great-grandfather began running our farm in Southwest Georgia, he butchered one cow, a couple of pigs and a few chickens every Saturday. This meat and poultry, along with the vegetables that they grew, fed him and the 100 emancipated slaves that worked for him on the farm. He raised his animals on his pastures, outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine, where they thrived on grass and forage. The cattle grazed, the pigs rooted and the chickens pecked and scratched.

Almost a century later, my father took over the management of our farm, White Oak Pastures. This was after World War II, when traditional farming practices began to be commoditized, centralized and industrialized. Farms all over the country started to operate like factories, churning out cheap meat with a steep

ecological price tag. My father decided to structure our operation as a monoculture of cattle, abandoning the production of other crops and animals for the sake of “efficiency.” He began feeding our cows a high carbohydrate grain ration, in confinement, where they would gain weight three times faster than eating grass on open pasture.

By this point, scientists had discovered that feeding sub-therapeutic levels of antibiotics to livestock caused weight gain and faster growth, so my dad, along with most of the cattlemen in the country, put our cows on drugs. He followed the advice of the newly formed agricultural chemical companies and made heavy and frequent applications of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides to our pastures.

Yet, no one warned us that these new ‘tools’ would wreak unintended consequences on the farm. The dramatically lowered production costs extracted a high toll on the stewardship of our land and on

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Are We Becoming China’s Factory Farm?

US hog operations are feeding more than a billion people’s growing appetite for pork.

by Tom Philpott
Mother Jones Magazine

China is in the midst of a love affair with pork. Its consumption of the stuff has nearly doubled since 1993 and just keeps rising. The Chinese currently eat 88 pounds per capita each year—far more than Americans’ relatively measly 60 pounds. To meet the growing demand, China’s hog farms have grown and multiplied, and more than half of the globe’s pigs are now raised there. But even so, its production can’t keep up with the pork craze.

So where is China looking to supply its demand for chops, ribs, loins, butts, and bellies? Not Southeast Asia or Africa—more like Iowa and North Carolina. US pork exports to China surged from about 57,000 metric tons in 2003 to more than 430,000 metric tons in 2012, about a fifth of all such exports. And that was before a Chinese company announced its intention to buy US pork giant Smithfield Foods

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JFAN NEWSLETTER

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In the News.....

Over 10% of US Hog Market Reduced by PED Virus

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv), a resilient and highly contagious coronavirus, is hitting the US pork industry hard, killing over 10% of the pigs born in the US since its introduction into the US last spring, reports *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

PEDv is particularly devastating to young piglets; 80-100% die from severe dehydration caused by watery diarrhea. Hogs 10 weeks and older are better able to withstand the disease, with a high percentage generally recovering within 3-4 days.

To date, nearly 8 million piglets have died. A recent survey conducted by the National Animal Health Laboratory Network reports 7,348 hog operations in 31 states have tested positive for PEDv, including 2,100 operations in Iowa. At least 40% of the US sow herd is affected.

PEDv is turning up in other countries, too, including several European and Asian nations, reports the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention. So far, Canada has experienced only a handful of isolated outbreaks.

Researchers at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech say PEDv likely originated in the Anhui Province of China. They report that there are no indications yet that PEDv could be transferred from one species to another. However, they did discover the US PEDv strains have some of the same genetic characteristics as a bat coronavirus and acknowledge the possibility of cross species transmission.

It remains a mystery as to how the virus was introduced into the US.

In Ohio, a new, yet distinct coronavirus was discovered in four hog operations, with clinical signs similar to PEDv and transmissible gastroenteritis, another related disease, reports the Ohio

Department of Agriculture. It appears to be closely related to a coronavirus discovered in 2012 in Hong Kong.

PEDv spreads quickly in barns via fecal to oral transmission. Confinements are advised to incorporate strict biosecurity measures, but even with that, the virus



can survive in tiny amounts of manure that adhere to boots or trucks. Smaller independent producers with fewer, free-range hogs and minimal contact with other farms are the most

successful in avoiding the virus.

The pork industry has been quick to point out that the virus poses no threat to food safety or human health.

Until recently, it was assumed that affected surviving hogs develop immunity to PEDv, and that once hit, a hog operation would not experience new outbreaks. However, the American Association of Swine Veterinaries announced in May that the reinfection rate of affected farms is as high as 30%.

France recently banned the import of live pigs, pork-based byproducts, and pig sperm from the US; China and Japan had already imposed temporary restrictions on US pig imports. The ban chiefly involves animal feed, which contains pig plasma, used in the diets of weaned piglets. The plasma, taken from slaughtered hogs, is suspected in the transmission of the disease.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced on June 5 that the USDA would provide \$26.2 million in funding to combat PEDv. In addition, a Federal Order was issued requiring hog operations to report new detections of the virus to the US Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service or state animal health officials.

Initial vaccines demonstrated limited success, but a new vaccine developed by

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How the FDA's Voluntary Guidance Fails to Curb Antibiotic Misuse in Livestock

By Sarah Borron
Researcher, Food and Water Watch

Last December, FDA released voluntary guidance to industry (GFI #213) that would limit certain nontherapeutic uses of what the agency deems “medically important” antibiotics in livestock and put those drugs under the guidance of a veterinarian. Currently, many antibiotics are available for livestock producers to use for nontherapeutic reasons and without veterinary oversight. FDA's action to curb these uses is long overdue.

But that guidance comes with a catch. It only limits the use of medically important antibiotics for promoting faster growth in livestock. Giving livestock low doses of antibiotics necessary to treat human illnesses to make the animals grow faster – all the while creating antibiotic-resistant bacteria in those livestock – is a pretty terrible use of an important resource. However, the FDA guidance still permits low doses of antibiotics to be given to healthy animals as disease prevention. Whether for growth promotion or disease prevention, the result is the same: this practice is creating more bacteria resistant to antibiotics that we need to protect human health.

Food & Water Watch analyzed FDA's list of over 400 antibiotic drug products affected by GFI #213 to find out just how much overlap exists between growth promotion uses, which are being limited, and prevention uses, which remain unchecked. Each drug has a list of “label indications,” or reasons the drug can be used in certain conditions. Using FDA's search function and also reading each label, we identified overlapping indications that demonstrate significant loopholes in GFI #213.

FDA's list includes 217 antibiotic drug products with growth promotion indica-

tions. Of those drugs, 63 percent also have disease prevention indications, meaning the drugs can continue to be used nontherapeutically, which will continue to promote the development of antibiotic resistance. Of the remaining medically important antibiotic drugs used for growth promotion, 59 can still be used for “disease control” in healthy animals.

That leaves only 23 drugs – 11 percent – with no approved nontherapeutic uses under full implementation of GFI #213.

To put it another way, 89 percent of the drugs losing growth promotion uses can still be given to healthy animals for other reasons, leading to the spread of antibiotic resistance.

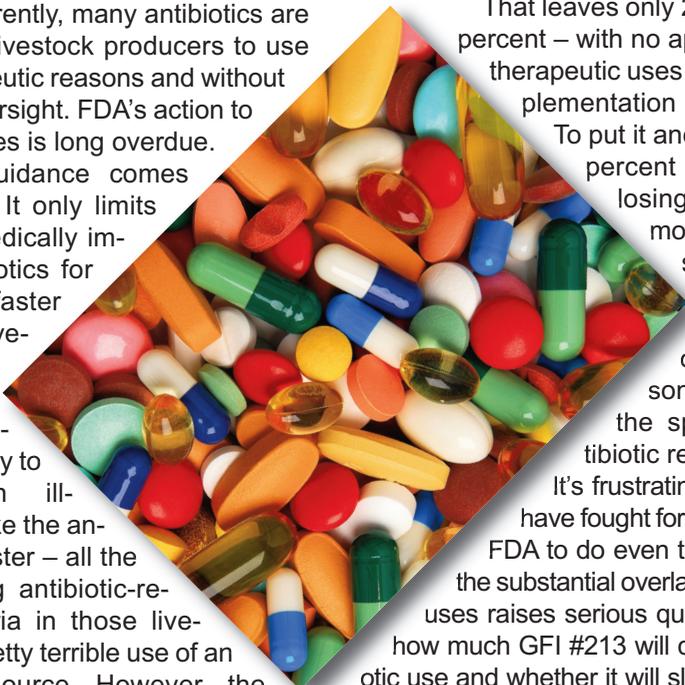
It's frustrating. Advocates have fought for years to push FDA to do even this much. Yet the substantial overlap of allowable uses raises serious questions about how much GFI #213 will change antibiotic use and whether it will slow the development of antibiotic resistance.

According to Tyler Smith, program officer at the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future who has written about the voluntary guidelines, “The overlap between growth promotion and disease prevention makes the voluntary guidelines a shell game. FDA should use its regulatory authority to ban feeding low doses of antibiotics to food animals, including for disease prevention.”

To save antibiotics and protect human health, we need a complete ban on nontherapeutic uses of antibiotic use in livestock. Take a moment to tell Congress to step in and pass a ban.

<http://tinyurl.com/nde5zav>

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In the News.....

Eight Cities Take Action for Removing Antibiotics from Feed

Eight cities have passed a resolution that supports the reduction of antibiotics in livestock production, reports Food & Water Watch, actions spurred on by its Campaign to Save Antibiotics. The resolutions support passage of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMPTA) and it's Senate version, Preventing Antibiotic Resistance Act (PARA).

PAMPTA and PARA would ban nontherapeutic uses of antibiotics in livestock production.

The vast majority – 80% – of antibiotics sold in the US are used for agriculture, and most of these drugs are routinely fed to animals to compensate for filthy, crowded living conditions on factory farms, says a Food & Water Watch press release.

“The science is clear and the medical community is in agreement – unless we act soon to end the irresponsible use of antibiotics, they won't work when we really need them,” said Food & Water Watch Executive Director Wenonah Hauter. “For years, Food & Water Watch and the public health community have advocated for legislation to rein in the abuse of antibiotics on factory farms. With little action in Congress, and inadequate response from the FDA, we're helping to empower communities to take action.”

JFAN is working with Food & Water Watch and has begun a conversation with Fairfield City Council members to explore becoming the ninth national city to pass a resolution.

These Cities Have Passed A Resolution in Support of PAMPA and PARA

- ★ Providence, RI
- ★ Cleveland, OH
- ★ Red Bank, NJ
- ★ Pittsburgh, PA
- ★ Seattle, WA
- ★ Madison, WI
- ★ St. Paul, MN
- ★ Secaucus, NJ

CHINA *continued from p. 1*

in 2013. The way things are going, the United States is poised to become China's very own factory hog farm. Here are a few reasons why:

It's now cheaper to produce pork in the US than in China. You read that right: Our meat industry churns out hogs for about \$0.57 per pound, according to the US Department of Agriculture, versus \$0.68 per pound in China's new, factory-scale hog farms. The main difference is feed costs. US pig producers spend about 25 percent less on feed than their Chinese counterparts, the USDA found, because the "United States has more abundant land, water, and grain resources."

Americans are not as fond of "the other white meat" as we once were.

You wouldn't know it from the menus in trendy restaurants, but US consumers' appetite for pork hit a peak in 1999 and has declined ever since. Yet industry, beholden to shareholders demanding growth, keeps churning out more. According to its latest projections, the USDA expects US pork exports to rise by another 0.9 metric tons by 2022—a 33 percent jump from 2012 levels.

Much of China's arable land is polluted. Fully 40 percent has been degraded by erosion, salinization, or acidification—and nearly 20 percent is tainted by industrial effluent, sewage, excessive farm chemicals, or mining runoff. The pollution makes soil less productive, and dangerous elements like cadmium have turned up in rice crops.

Chinese rivers have been vanishing since the 1990s as demand from farms and factories has helped suck them dry. Of the ones that remain, 75 percent are severely polluted, and more than a third of those are so toxic they can't be used to irrigate farms, according to a 2008 report by the Chinese government. According to the World Bank, China's average annual water resources are less than 2,200 cubic meters per



capita. The United States, by contrast, boasts almost 9,400 cubic meters of water per person.

Chinese consumers are losing trust in the nation's food supply—and will pay for alternatives. A spate of food-related scandals over the past half decade has made food safety the Chinese public's No. 1 concern, a 2013 study from Shanghai Jiao Tong University found. Judith Shapiro, author of the 2012 book *China's Environmental Challenges* and director of the Natural Resources and Sustainable Development program at American University, says she expects Smithfield pork

to command "quite a premium" in China, because it's perceived as safer and better than the domestic stuff. Already, "US pork is particularly popular and commands

premium prices, as it is viewed as higher quality due to our strict food safety laws," a *Bloomberg Businessweek* columnist reported last July.

But what's good for pork exporters may not be good for the United States: More mass-produced pork also means more pollution to air and water from toxic manure, more dangerous and low-wage work, and more antibiotic-resistant pathogens. And that's just the beginning. In addition to ramping up foreign meat purchases, China is also rapidly transforming its domestic meat industry along the US industrial model—and importing enormous amounts of feed to do so. The Chinese and their hogs, chickens, and cows gobble up a jaw-dropping 60 percent of the global trade in soybeans, and the government may soon also ramp up corn imports—because while Beijing currently limits foreign corn purchases, meat producers are clamoring for more. And where does a third of the globe's corn come from? You guessed it: The good old USA.

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Untreated animal waste:
"Public Enemy Number One."

"How loudly must the alarm bell ring before we realize that landspreading of manure is cheap, medieval and deadly?"

GORDON STEVENSON

Former Chief of Runoff Management and 26 year veteran of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Quoted at a November meeting of the Clean Water Action Council and Kewaunee Cares, Wisconsin.

Source: TheCountryToday.com

PEDV *continued from p. 2*

an Iowa company appears to be promising, says the USDA. It was granted a conditional license in June. It can be sold without restriction to swine producers and veterinarians fighting the disease. So far, two million doses have been sold.

In the midst of all the hog loss, some pork industry experts say PEDv may ironically provide greater profits for the pork industry this year. The number of market-ready hogs may drop by as much as 10% or more. But hogs will likely go to market at a higher weight, resulting in a higher total value per head sold. This combination may result in increased profits, as added revenues could far exceed the costs of production losses. "Certainly more profits for those who don't get PED and probably more that have gotten PED," writes Jim Long, President and CEO of Genesus Genetics, in an article published on ThePigSite.com.

The loss of piglets doesn't seem to be affecting the expansion of the hog market in Iowa. According to a representative at the Department of Natural Resources, many operators are increasing production of sow operations to make up for the loss. It's a time of expansion, he adds. Low corn and soy prices were already creating a favorable economic climate for hog expansion.

Additional sources: National Hog Farmer, Tech Times, Reuters, National Pork Board, NBC News, Canadian Swine Health Board

Our Activities At a Glance:

JFAN Working Hard for You

by **Diane Rosenberg**
Executive Director, JFAN

Even in the face of the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus (PEDv) that has killed nearly eight million piglets, significant CAFO expansion is taking place in Southeast Iowa. Jefferson County is not as hard hit as some other counties, but neither have we escaped without any new development. The following is confirmed activity we have seen at press time.

Hog House

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approved a 2480-head confinement for Section 12 of Black Hawk Township on May 29. The CAFO, owned by Jim Adam of Hog Haven Agri-Sales, will be built on Mahogany Avenue, Richland, just south of 110th Street. Mr. Adam does not live next to his new CAFO.

Hog House will be sited across the street, and less than a half mile away, from AMA Farms, a 2480-head factory farm built last year by Matt and Aaron Adam, Jim Adam's son and nephew, respectively.

After reviewing the application, JFAN had concerns that Aaron Adam would be managing both confinements and the new CAFO thereby fall under the definition of Common Management with AMA Farms. We submitted a complaint to the DNR requesting that the agency determine if Hog Haven should be considered an expansion of AMA Farms, requiring a permit and Master Matrix.

The DNR's legal counsel advised JFAN that while Iowa law may have defined such a situation as Common Management prior to 1995 (the year local control was rescinded), the law was changed in preceding years, and the definition did not apply to this situation. (See the following update on the Casey Diehl CAFOs for more on this.)

Letters went out to all neighbors in a two-mile radius, and several neighbors expressed concern. JFAN is providing informational guidance to this group as they weigh their options for taking action.

Casey and Tracy Diehl CAFOs

A 5,000 head hog operation owned by Casey and Tracy Diehl was proposed and approved last fall. The CAFOs are located at 2636 and 2694 167th Street, Fairfield in Section 2 of Buchanan Township. The Diehl sites were submitted as two separate 2480-head CAFOs, one in Casey Diehl's name and one in his wife, Tracy Diehl's, name.

Neighbors spoke to Mr. Diehl about their concerns last fall, and at the time, Mr. Diehl didn't pursue construction. Within the last few weeks, however, the neighbors indirectly found out that Mr. Diehl was moving ahead with building his confinement.

Given the family relationship between Casey and Tracy Diehl and the close proximity of the buildings, the two factory farms should be considered one site under the Iowa Code's definition of Common Ownership. JFAN filed a complaint with the DNR stating the operation should require a permit and Master Matrix, regardless of the fact they were in two different LLC names. JFAN made the point that the CAFOs also should be considered under Common Management since, based on our investigations, we found it likely Mr. Diehl would be managing both confinements.

In following up on our complaints, JFAN learned that the DNR's investigation found Ms. Diehl's LLC was set up so that she was a minority owner, with the majority ownership placed under another family member's name. The law states that majority ownership is required for the Common Ownership definition to be applied in a situation involving spouses. This appears to be an attempt to circumvent laws that provide for greater oversight through the Master Matrix and construction permit process for facilities over 2500 head of hogs.

CAFOs with 2500 or more hogs must be built with greater separation distances from residences, churches, and businesses and must follow somewhat stronger regulations as required through the Master Matrix.

JFAN also learned that the Iowa Legislature has changed how the definition of Common Management is

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WENONAH HAUTER
Executive Director
Food and Water Watch

Plus a legal review of area cases.

(and maybe a surprise or two...)

applied. According to the DNR's legal counsel, the Integrator (the hog corporation that contracts with the Diehl's) is legally considered the manager of the CAFO since the Integrator owns the hogs, provides the feed, and dictates in detail how the livestock should be raised. Mr. Diehl is considered a "worker", not a manager, of his own operation since he must follow the Integrator's strict guidelines.

However, Iowa law now exempts Integrators from the Common Management definition, which wasn't the case in the past. Now the term Common Management refers to a third-party company hired by an Integrator specifically to manage CAFOs owned directly by the Integrator, a relatively uncommon situation in Iowa.

Iowa laws provide convenient loopholes to disqualify many CAFO owners from adhering to the minimal

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News Briefs

FROM IOWA, THE US AND BEYOND

Report: Ottumwa's Excel Plant Largest Polluter of Des Moines River

Excel, Cargill's Ottumwa-based swine processing plant, is the state's largest polluter of the Des Moines River watershed, according to the Environment Iowa Research and Policy Center, reports Iowa Public Radio.

The processing plant dumped over 2.8 million pounds of nitrogen-based pollutants into the lower Des Moines River in 2012, Environment Iowa says in their report

The plant takes environmental stewardship seriously, says Excel's Director of Communications Mike Martin. He defends the actions saying the pollutants "have no toxicity to aquatic life, but they do have to be recorded."

However, John Rumpler, senior attorney for Environment Iowa, points out that "very little can survive" in algae blooms caused by the release of nitrogen, nitrates, and phosphorus.

The Excel plant is the ninth largest polluter of watersheds nationwide, reports Environment Iowa.

The nation's sixth largest industrial polluter, Tyson Fresh Meats in Dakota City, Nebraska, dumps wastes into the Blackbird-Soldier watershed, which extends into Iowa.

Tyson Suggest New Welfare Goals After Video of Animal Abuse Airs

Tyson Foods outlined new animal welfare goals in a January letter to their contract hog growers reports *National Hog Farmer* and Tyson Foods.

Pork producers were informed that Tyson would increase the number of third party sow farm audits conducted through the corporation's "Farm Check" animal welfare program, begun in 2012.

In addition, Tyson urged pork producers to:

- Incorporate video monitoring to increase oversight and decrease biosecurity risks in their sow barns.
- Stop using manual blunt force as a primary method of euthanizing sick or injured piglets, a commonly accepted industry practice.
- Use pain mitigation techniques, such as anesthetics or analgesics, for tail docking and castration.
- Improve housing for pregnant sows with larger gestation crates or group housing.

None of the goals are mandated.

Steve Weiss, President of Value Added Science and Technologies, a company that works closely with swine production



Photo: Courtesy of US Geological Survey

leaders in the US and Canada, wrote in *PorkNetwork.com* that the letter generated a lot of industry concern. However he says the letter appears "to simply be an attempt to appease animal rights activists."

The new guidelines were released a month and a half after NBC News aired a Mercy for Animals investigative video that showed hogs being abused by workers in West Coast Farms of Okfuskee County, Oklahoma. Tyson terminated its agreement with the confinement operator shortly after the video was aired.

Nearly Half a Million Europeans Petition for Humane Treatment of Hogs

European agricultural ministers meeting in Brussels were handed petitions in March signed by over 475,000 European Union (EU) citizens calling for more humane treatment for hogs, reports *ThePigSite.com*.

The petition, generated by Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) calls upon every EU Agricultural Minister to ensure their country fully adheres to the EU Pigs Directive. The directive, developed by the EU, bans gestation crates and routine tail docking and provides for straw bedding for hogs.

According to CIWF, the EU banned gestation crates in 2013, but six EU nations are not complying with the directive.

"The people want laws enforced and pigs protected. The question now is – how can the EU Commission continue to ignore this call for action and integrity. The Pigs Directive has stipulated the requirements. All we are asking for is for the law to be enforced," says Dil Peeling, CIWF's Director of Campaigns.

Kansas Approves 396,000 Head Hog Expansion

If living next to a 2500 head CAFO wasn't bad enough, residents of Greeley County, Kansas, are facing an expansion of Seaboard Farms' Ladder Creek hog farm that would increase the 132,000-head CAFO to as many as 396,000 nursery piglets or 198,000 mature hogs reports the Kansas Health Institute.



Photo: Elie Bauer www.simplyrecipes.com

Seaboard will expand their current operations by 50%, adding four additional 15-barn sites. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) approved the expansion even though the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club filed a complaint citing inadequate water for the operation. A recent Kansas Geological Survey report said the Ogallala Aquifer at the hog site was "effectively exhausted."

Water is needed to dilute the hog sewage that sits in the lagoons. The KDHE, addressing the Sierra Club complaint said, "Nothing in the statutes or regulations makes it incumbent upon the Department to ensure the permittee has access to enough water to properly operate the waste management system."

The Seaboard expansion will become the second-largest CAFO operation in the country.

First WHO Global Report on Antibiotic Resistance: Public Health Threatened Now

A new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) – its first to look at antimicrobial resistance, including antibiotic resistance, globally – reveals that this serious threat is no longer a prediction for the future, it is happening right now in every region of the world and has the potential to affect anyone, of any age, in any country, according to a WHO news release. Antibiotic resistance – when bacteria change so antibiotics no longer work in people who need them to treat infections – is now a major threat to public health,

“Without urgent, coordinated action by many stakeholders, the world is headed for a post-antibiotic era, in which common infections and minor injuries which have been treatable for decades can once again kill,” says Dr Keiji Fukuda, WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Health Security. “Effective antibiotics have been one of the pillars allowing us to live longer, live healthier, and benefit from modern medicine. Unless we take significant actions to improve efforts to prevent infections and also change how we produce, prescribe and use antibiotics, the world will lose more and more of these

global public health goods and the implications will be devastating.”

Key findings from the report include, among others, that antibiotic resistance causes people to be sick for longer and increases the risk of death. For example, people with MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) are estimated to be 64% more likely to die than people with a non-resistant form of the infection. Resistance also increases the cost of health care with lengthier hospital stays and more intensive care required.

The report reveals that key tools to tackle antibiotic resistance show gaps or do not exist in many countries. While some countries have taken important steps in addressing the problem, every country and individual needs to do more.

Among its many recommendations, the report urges health workers to prescribe and dispense antibiotics only when they are truly needed. It calls on policy makers to regulate and promote the appropriate use of medicines.

The report provides the most comprehensive picture of drug resistance to date, incorporating data from 114 countries.

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laws that govern confinements. The laws are written to promote animal agriculture and not the environment or Iowa citizens. It’s indeed a very frustrating situation with our laws having very little meaning and providing very little protection.

JFAN will continue to address the LLC situation in Iowa, which allows for large confinements to be separated into smaller unpermitted operations on paper even though a large confinement is the reality. We are exploring options with environmental attorney Danielle Diamond, Executive Director of the Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP), who has dealt with similar issues in Illinois. We will keep you posted on any breakthroughs in this area.

Jacob Adam CAFO

Jacob Adam is building an 1800-head CAFO at 2773 Salina Road, Fairfield, in Section 12 of Buchanan Township. This CAFO is less than a mile southeast of the Diehls’ confinement.

Mr. Adam is a young CAFO owner, and the confinement will be sited on the property of Tom Adam, his father. On his DNR application, Mr. Adam lists his home as being within Fairfield’s city limits, and it appears he will not be living next to his

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Support JFAN During Our 2014 Fundraising Drive

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Thank you for all you do to support JFAN!

MONEYMAKER *continued from p. 1*

the welfare of our animals. I inherited the farm in my twenties, and for decades I raised cattle just like my father. But with each passing season, and each load of cows shipped to a distant slaughter, there was a slow shift in me.

After years of loading cattle on semi-trucks for cross country shipment, I remember the day that I noticed, for the first time, that the animals on the bottom level were showered with the urine and feces of the animals above them for the days-long trip. It was incredible to me that I hadn't seen their suffering before. No food, no water, no rest, incomprehensible panic, deplorable conditions.

The pressure to lower cost of production, by any means possible, had made me blind to everything else. Yet, despite our increased pressure on the herd and the land, our profit margins remained razor thin. I could not tolerate the idea of handing my daughters an unhappy herd and a poisoned farm that was in a constant state of financial stress. I wanted to give the next generation — the fifth generation at White Oak Pastures — a system that, with hard work as a given, could provide a pleasant lifestyle and a comfortable income for them and their children.

When I started to rethink the farm's future, I didn't find answers in the sleek pages of an agricultural magazine, hawking expensive machines and bottles of this and that. The solution wasn't technical or even new. What saved our farm was returning to the old holistic farming ways, the ways that my great-grandfather used. We took the cows off grain and antibiotics and returned them to the pasture. We stopped using pesticides and chemical fertilizers. We brought back the chickens and pigs, and added sheep, goats, rabbits, turkeys, geese, guinea fowl and duck. We once again kept the animals outside on pasture at all times.

In order to treat our livestock with respect from birth to death, we built two of the very few humane-kill on-farm abattoirs in the country. One is for red meat species and the other is for poultry. Now we market

our products to major retailers like Whole Foods, and serve our meat to guests at the farm restaurant and to staff at the on-site dining hall. We use everything from the tail to the snout, converting tallow into biodiesel, eviscerate into compost, hides into leather, and underutilized meat into charcuterie. Going beyond meat, we planted a huge organic vegetable garden and rented out cabins for eco and agritourists to experience country life.

The first year we stopped using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, the grass was sparse. The topsoil was dead and dry. It wasn't long, though, before the stomp of ruminant hooves and the scratching of bird feet started to build the organic matter in the soil. The animals naturally fertilized the land, as we rotated them from one section of pasture to the next, based on how much they had eaten and how fast the

grass was growing. Take a shovel full of White Oak Pasture's soil today, and you'll see a rich organic layer, teaming with life and running several inches deep.

The large-scale agribusiness model treats diversity like it's a liability. We've learned on our farm that nature abhors a monoculture. Broadening to diverse species has only been a benefit. My family has gone from generating revenues of less than half a million dollars each year in conventional beef to selling over \$25 million dollars annually in pasture-raised organic meats. White Oak Pastures has become the largest organic farm in Georgia.

We've scaled up our operation by recruiting 15 other grass-fed cattle producers nearby, all marketed under our label. Fifteen years ago, we had four employees, earning just minimum wage. Today, all of the 100-plus men and women helping us to steward the land and tend the animals make a good living wage.

It's important to me that people understand that we aren't just capitalizing on a niche market, selling to high-end consumers. We are dedicated to producing food that is as healthy to eat as it is sustainable to raise. Our farming practices

are literally returning vitality back to the farm, while allowing our animals to live the way Mother Nature intended.

I hope that my winning the NRDC and BFI Growing Green Sustainable Livestock Producer Award will help other farmers to see the value in organic farming. The market demand has developed for antibiotic-free, pasture-raised, humanely-farmed meats. What makes your soil and animals strong, will make your customers healthy, your employees happy, and your investments profitable. My own family's experience is proof that sustainable farming is economically sustainable too.

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Will Harris, owner of White Oak Pastures Photo: White Oak Pastures

UPDATE *continued from p. 7*

CAFO. The DNR approved the application on April 29.

JFAN assessed the Manure Management Plan and addressed several points with the DNR, which the agency investigated.

Toast Finisher

The DNR received an 1800-head CAFO application from Tony Adrian on May 30. The confinement would be sited on 130th Street, one-quarter mile east of Kava Avenue in Section 14 of Black Hawk Township.

Several concerned neighbors in the two-mile radius of Hog House area are also in the two-mile radius of Toast Finisher. Mr. Adrian lives $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile east of the proposed CAFO.

Notification was sent to all neighbors, and we have informed the neighborhood group organizing near Hog House about this new development.

JA-AM, LLC

James Tedrow is proposing a 2480-head factory farm at 1624 275th Street, Libertyville in Section 31 of Liberty Township. This CAFO is located near the Van Buren County border. Mr. Tedrow and his family live on the property, just west of where the CAFO is proposed.

Letters went out to all neighbors in the area, and a neighbor reached out to JFAN for assistance. We provided initial informational guidance and are available for continued support.