Currently, there is not much oversight in the use of medically important antibiotics on factory farms. A Frontline investigation revealed that even antibiotics not used in human medical treatments can raise the herd resistance of bacteria to other antibiotics used in human treatment (tetracyclines, for instance). Further, bacteria are capable of horizontal gene transfers between unrelated strains, so resistance traits can spread through casual contact from one type of bacteria to another.

Medical and Veterinary organizations currently support both pieces of legislation as it would establish a veterinarian-client-patient relationship between medical professionals and farmers and their animals, which currently does not exist at the scale of distribution of antibiotics in the food chain.

Here is Food & Water Watch's report on this issue.

REVIEW OF PAMTA AND PARA

Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA)

H.R. 1552; Introduced 3/23/15, currently awaiting committee hearing in House Energy and Commerce Cmte

Introduced by Congress' only microbiologist Representative Louise Slaughter (D-NY)

Full Title: To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials used in the treatment of human and animal diseases.

Click Here for Full Text

Summary: This bill amends the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to require an applicant for approval of a new animal drug that is a medically important antimicrobial to demonstrate that there is a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health from antimicrobial resistance attributable to the nontherapeutic use of the drug.

- Medically important antimicrobials: drugs intended for use in food-producing animals that contain 1) specified antibiotics, or 2) certain drugs on the WHO's list of critically important antimicrobials.

- Two years after enactment of this Act, the FDA must withdraw approval of a drug's nontherapeutic use in food-producing animals unless the FDA makes a determination that, based on the application holder's demonstration or an FDA risk analysis, there is a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health from antimicrobial resistance attributable to nontherapeutic use.

- The FDA must rescind an exemption for investigational use of, or approval of a new drug application for, a medically important antimicrobial for its nontherapeutic use in food-

producing animals two years after the exemption is granted or the application for approval is submitted unless there is a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health from antimicrobial resistance attributable to nontherapeutic use.

- A medically important antimicrobial cannot be administered (including through animal feed) to a food-producing animal for disease control unless there is a significant risk that a disease or infection present on the premises will be transmitted to the animal.

Preventing Antibiotic Resistance Act (PARA)

S. 621; Introduced 3/2/2015, currently awaiting committee hearing in Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Cmte

Introduced by Diane Feinstein (D-CA)

Full Title: A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to ensure the safety and effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials approved for use in the prevention and control of animal diseases, in order to minimize the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Click Here for Full Text

Summary: This act gives instructions to FDA to start the process of examining drug approvals in 2017 to be done in 2018. Also provides language defining a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (though this relationship is one the FDA already is working on and will likely be settled before the passage of either PARA or PAMTA).