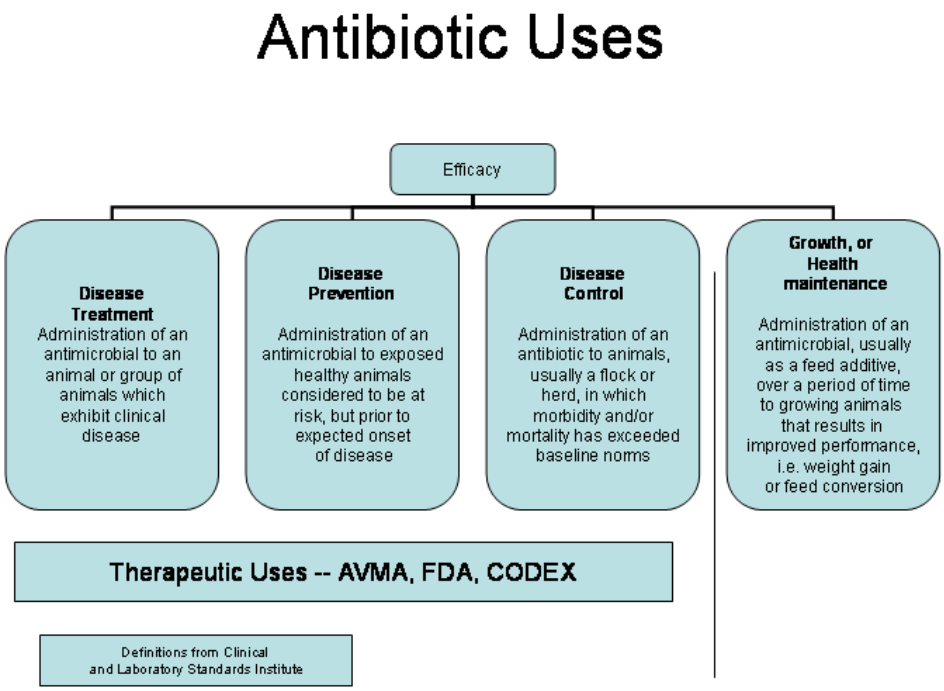
How Antibiotics Are Used in Animal Health Management Systems

The approval and use of antibiotics to treat sick animals and to maintain animal health is a science-driven process. The Food and Drug Administration approves antibiotics to treat specific diseases or conditions at specific dosage rates, and producers are legally required to follow these precise label directions.

There are four specific efficacy claims, or uses, for which FDA approves antibiotics for use in food animals:



The American Veterinary Medical Association, the Food and Drug Administration, and the international food safety standards body *Codex Alimentarius* all consider treatment, control and prevention to be therapeutic uses. Veterinarians and producers use antibiotics to prevent and control the spread of disease when they believe that an existing disease on a farm could rapidly spread to more animals. In addition, they use antibiotics to prevent disease at vulnerable times, such as weaning, when animals are very susceptible to disease that can kill them quickly – sometimes in less than 24 hours.

Some advocacy groups define "prevention" as "giving antibiotics to healthy animals." This definition has no practical merit in veterinary medicine or in scientific and regulatory bodies worldwide. Also, from an economic standpoint, cost-conscious

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producers will not spend time and money administering antibiotics that do not provide some benefit.

These therapeutic uses are different than routes of administration. Antibiotics can be given to animals via injection, or administered in feed or water. Feed or water delivery is common when a group of animals require antibiotics. Feed delivery can be used for administering an antibiotic for any of the four efficacy uses – disease treatment, disease prevention, disease control or growth.

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