 

*a joint project on* **ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE IN PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE**

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**Public Universities/Veterinary Medical Colleges’ Task Force**

**Unveils Recommendations & Launches Action Plan   
to Address Antibiotic Resistance in Production Agriculture**

**WASHINGTON, DC,** October 29, 2015--The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) | Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) Task Force on Antibiotic Resistance in Production Agriculture today unveiled a much-anticipated report that outlines a comprehensive national strategy for diminishing the role antibiotics used in food animal production systems play in the broader antimicrobial resistance (AMR) problem.

The Task Force, comprised of leaders from U.S. agriculture colleges/land grant universities and veterinary colleges as well as key representatives from the production animal agriculture community and the pharmaceutical industry, detailed a comprehensive research and educational agenda along with plans on how it intends to implement it.

The report’s agenda is designed to explore and describe the nature and implications of the problem and educate producers, healthcare providers and the public about best practices. It also calls for a series of national summits to elevate the issue of antibiotic resistance to the top of the national agenda.

Formed last fall, the 14-member task force has been working closely with federal government agencies to develop an action plan that will leverage the collective strengths and expertise of North American universities to address what the Obama administration has termed a national security priority.

“We know that antibiotic resistance is biologically complex and poorly understood,” said Dr. Lonnie King, a former dean of The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine and former senior Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) official who co-chaired the task force with University of Illinois President Emeritus Robert Easter. “We also know that the scope and scale of the problem threatens human, animal and environmental health, nationally and globally. The committee has accomplished some important work, but now we need to take action. Solving this problem is going to require focus, resources, collaboration and sustained effort.”

The Task Force report also contains a detailed strategy for implementing their educational, outreach and research program recommendations. A full-time program manager has been hired to provide administrative leadership and management. The APLU and AAVMC will work to identify a national consortium of faculty experts within their member institutions to build out the programs and collaborate with federal agency personnel.

A centralized University Research Organization (URO) is envisioned to serve as a coordinating center for the educational and research programs that need to be created and operated. The URO would engage the full complement of stakeholders in a public-private partnership that would serve as the focal point for a sustained, consolidated research and educational effort. Though physically housed within a single academic institution, the URO would have a supra-organizational governing body, scientific advisory council, and subscription membership available for pharmaceutical companies, commodity organizations and others engaged in the fight against antibiotic resistance.

Pilot projects focused on combating antibiotic resistance will be created at several large universities with substantial human medical, veterinary medical, and agricultural centers.

A series of educational workshops and leadership forums uniting personnel from federal agencies, industry, NGO’s and academic institutions will be convened to explain and advance the Task Force recommendations. Other strategies designed to support the successful implementation of the Task Force recommendations include:

* Frequent collaboration/meetings with USDA, FDA, CDC, PCAST representatives, agricultural and veterinary medical organizational, federal task force officials to ensure coordination and alignment
* Broad collaboration with representatives from the OIE, FAO, WHO and other global organizations with interest and programs in this area
* Engagement with federal government agencies to resolve the issue of lack of veterinarians in many rural communities across the United States

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria, according to the CDC, cause at least 2 million illnesses and 23,000 deaths in the United States every year. Infections caused by these pathogens cost an estimated $20 billion a year in direct health care costs and up to $35 billion in lost productivity as a result of hospitalizations and sick days. The growing public health threat has prompted action on a number of fronts.

Following the “Combating Antibiotic Resistance” report published in September 2014 by the President’s Council on Advisors on Science and Technology, an Executive Order was issued by the administration to create a five-year National Action Plan. Critical features of the plan include 1) slowing the spread of resistant infections, 2) strengthening One Health surveillance efforts, 3) developing improved diagnostic tests, 4) accelerating research and development, and 5) improving international collaboration.

The AAVMC | APLU Task Force report will be broadly disseminated among the vast array of stakeholders involved with the issue. King’s recent appointment to co-lead the Presidential Advisory Council on Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria will help ensure that the APLU/AAVMC Task Force recommendations are fully considered as elements of the official national action plan.

To develop the report, task force members convened with federal government officials in Washington several times. The report outlines the benefits of leveraging the research and development capabilities of the nation’s universities, as well as the working relationships maintained by faculty members at the nation’s land-grant universities with members of the production animal community through the USDA’s Cooperative Extension Service.

“Solving problems through the production and application of knowledge is a key role of colleges and universities in society,” said Peter McPherson, president of APLU. “This is a big challenge with global implications, but it is one our land-grant and public universities are well-qualified to address. Our universities can conduct the research that must be undertaken and transmit the information that must be shared. I think we’ve taken a significant step forward, and we look forward to building on this progress.”

Veterinarians play a critical role in the success of the effort because of their expertise in both animal and public health. Their role in animal agricultural production has become even more important following the Food & Drug Administration’s recently issued Guidance(s) 209 and 213 and the Veterinary Feed Directive, which enhance veterinary oversight of antibiotics used in animal production. Most of the nation’s colleges of veterinary medicine are located at Land-grant universities.

“Our task force has focused on the role animal agriculture is playing in this problem and our colleges of veterinary medicine play an instrumental role in those agricultural production systems,” said Dr. Andrew T. Maccabe, executive director of the AAVMC. “Effective solutions are going to require a collaborative approach, and one of the great strengths of this task force report is that it includes perspectives and contributions from government, academia and industry.”

*APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization representing 237 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations. Founded in 1887, APLU is North America's oldest higher education association with member institutions in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, Canada, and Mexico. Annually, APLU member campuses enroll 4.7 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.1 million degrees, employ 1.3 million faculty and staff, and conduct $41 billion in university-based research.*

*The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) is a nonprofit membership organization working to protect and improve the health and welfare of animals, people and the environment by advancing academic veterinary medicine. Members include 49 accredited veterinary medical colleges in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia, as well as 23 affiliate members.*

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