

# Antibiotics in food need more scrutiny

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THE use of antibiotics in food production should be further regulated to tackle the growing worldwide problem of superbugs.

Professor Peter Collignon, an expert in infectious diseases and microbiology from the Australian National University, believes the first step would be to ban the use of third-generation cephalosporins in animals, as the US has done.

Writing in *The Lancet*, he warned of potentially untreatable salmonella infections – such as the Kentucky serotype – with strains becoming increasingly resistant to fluoroquinolones, third-generation cephalosporins and carbapenems.

Fluoroquinolones are banned in animals used for food production in Australia and restricted for use in humans. This has resulted in virtually no resistance to them in salmonella, campylobacter and *E. coli* strains in animals or foods, Professor Collignon stated.

However, he was concerned this may cause complacency and called for tighter restrictions and monitoring of foods, such as prawns imported from Asia, to prevent a “severe public health concern” affecting Australia.

“We don’t have superbugs in our food and we need to keep it that way because there are no new antibiotics coming,” he said.

“We need new laws now so that we don’t have to respond after the event, which is what has happened in the US. Third-generation cephalosporins should not be used in food animals.”

Professor Collignon said he understood cephalosporins were still given to herds of cows and pigs, despite rules indicating the use should be based on individual animal need. ■

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