NEWS RELEASE

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FARAD Goes Global to Help Reduce Chemical Residue in Animals

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Knowing that animals sometimes must be treated with drugs for various illnesses or to prevent disease, how do you know if the food products coming from these animals – things like milk, eggs, cheese and meats – are safe to eat?

To ensure that the food products coming from animals are free from drug, pesticide or environmentally contaminated residue, nations across the globe are joining researchers at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine and two other U.S. universities in an effort to provide livestock producers and veterinarians with information on how to keep dangerous residue out of the food supply.

The Food Animal Residue Avoidance Database (FARAD) is a support system designed to provide information on how to avoid drug, pesticide and environmental contaminant residue problems. FARAD is a nationally funded program that is administered by three universities – NC State, the University of Florida and the University of California-Davis.

Wherever drugs are used to treat sick animals or prevent disease, there is a potential that residues may be incurred. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), which must approve all drugs meant to be marketed for use in animals, establishes tolerances for drug residue to ensure food safety. The USFDA also establishes "withdrawal times" or "withholding periods," which are times after drug treatment when milk and eggs are not to be used for food, and during which animals can't be processed. This allows time for the animals to eliminate the drug residue.

Canada, the United Kingdom and France have all joined FARAD, and this month a delegation from China will visit NC State for three days to learn how to set up a FARAD system in its country.

"We are reliant on other countries' regulation systems being adequate to protect our public, that's what it comes down to. We test what comes into our borders – the U.S. Department of Agriculture does that – but it's a risky approach to just test quality into a system,

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you should also build quality into a system," said Dr. Ronette Gehring, research assistant professor in pharmacology at NC State's College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Quality assurance should really be about making sure everything is done correctly from the beginning and preventing residue, rather than relying solely on testing at the end when the product crosses our borders," she said.

According to Gehring, while each country setting up a FARAD program follows the original FARAD model, each sets up its own program, making its own adjustments to suit its specific needs. Each country is also responsible for securing its own funding for the program.

"Canada started a FARAD program in 2001. They've taken the FARAD model, adapted it and taken it a step further. For instance, their government structures are more centralized, and they have a different regulatory environment, so they've made it fit their system" she said.

Gehring says environmental contamination is an area in which FARAD could expand. Suppose a barn containing pesticides is washed away in hurricane and contaminates a pasture where cows are grazing. What are the chances the pesticides will end up in the milk?

"I think we raise awareness among vets to think of the consequences of using drugs in animals. That's important. I think we need to ensure that the countries from which we import have systems set up to ensure the quality of all food products. Testing what crosses our borders is essential but will only go so far, because you can only test so much," Gehring said.

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