

Abstract

The use of antibiotics in the rearing of Beef and Dairy cattle in St. Catherine, Jamaica and its public Health implications

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The increase in the number of antibiotic resistant organisms worldwide, and the spread of resistance from closed environment of hospitals into open communities are increasingly perceived as threat to public health. The excessive use of antibiotics both in human and animal medicine is suspected as one of the major contributing factors to this phenomenon of antibiotic resistance. There is also concern about the detection of antibiotic drug residues in foods of animal-origin, which is a major barrier to international trade due its' public health implications. This study was carried out to determine the knowledge, attitudes and practices of cattle farmers in the parish St. Catherine with respect to the use of antibiotics and also to determine the presence of any antibiotic drug residue in the meat of slaughtered beef cattle and milk of dairy cattle. This study also involved a review of the laws and regulation related to antibiotic use in the country. This study analyzed data obtained from 90 farmers in the Old Harbour and Linstead area of St. Catherine during the period stated. Data was collected via a questionnaire and samples collected from farm and slaughterer-houses

in the parish. The educational level of the farmers ranged from primary through to tertiary with most of them having primary level education.

The major findings revealed that:

Most farmers questioned were knowledgeable and had a positive attitude and good practices with respect to the use of antibiotics in animals.

The extent of antibiotic use among farmers in the parish was minimal.

The levels of antibiotics in slaughtered beef cattle and milk of dairy cattle was lower than expected, especially among the beef farmers where no positives samples were found.

The laws relating to the sale and use of antibiotics in Jamaica were not generally known to the farmers.

All the farmers thought that government should do more on giving farmers advice on the use of antibiotics.

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