



DIFFERENCES IN AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH FARM ANTIBIOTIC STANDARDS

The UK is attempting to negotiate a free-trade deal with Australia and hopes to ultimately join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade group that includes Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan and Vietnam. The government has previously said that it will not allow British food and farming standards to be undercut, but recent reports indicate that tariff-free access could be granted to Australian animal foods.

How do British and Australian standards on farm antibiotic use differ?

FARM ANTIBIOTIC USE IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UK

Australia has poor surveillance of its farm antibiotic use, and the most recent data available is for 2010. In contrast, the UK publishes annual data on farm antibiotic use, most recently for 2019. Australian antibiotic use in pig and poultry production is far higher than the UK's.

Farm antibiotic sales (mg/ kg of population correction unit)

	Australia (2010)	UK (2019)	Australia/ UK ratio
Pigs	293	110	2.7
Poultry	299	18	16.6
Cattle	It is not possible to give an accurate estimate for cattle due to insufficient Australian data		

*Alliance estimate based on incomplete information

ANTIBIOTIC GROWTH PROMOTERS

UK: It has been illegal to use any antibiotic as a growth promoter in the UK or the EU since 2006. Next year the EU will also ban the importation of any meat or dairy produced from animals fed antibiotic growth promoters, but the UK has not indicated that it will implement a similar ban.

Australia: There is no legal ban on using antibiotics as growth promoters, but a voluntary industry initiative introduced in 2017 means that no antibiotics currently used in human medicine are licensed as growth promoters. However, five different antibiotics, which are not currently used in human medicine, are used as growth promoters in poultry, pigs, cattle and sheep:

- Olaquinox** – Used in pigs. Banned in the UK/EU in 1999 because it is genotoxic and possibly mutagenic.
- Avilamycin** – Used in chickens. Banned in the UK/EU in 2006.
- Bambermycin** – Used in poultry, pigs and cattle. Banned in the UK/EU in 1999.
- Monensin and Salinomycin** – Used in cattle, pigs and sheep. Both are ionophore antibiotics. Scientists are investigating whether ionophores can be developed for human use in the future. Ionophores are used in UK poultry industry to control coccidiosis disease but were banned as growth promoters in 2006.

USE OF ANTIBIOTICS TO ENABLE HORMONE GROWTH PROMOTION IN CATTLE

In Australia, hormone implants are used to promote growth in cattle, a practice that is banned in the UK and the EU. To prevent infection at the implant site, hormone implants often include tylosin, a macrolide antibiotic. Macrolide antibiotics are classified by the World Health Organization as high-priority critically important in human medicine.



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saveourantibiotics.org

The Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics is an alliance of health, medical, civil society and animal welfare groups campaigning to stop the overuse of antibiotics in animal farming. It was founded by **Compassion in World Farming**, the **Soil Association** and **Sustain** in 2009. Our vision is a world in which human and animal health and wellbeing are protected by food and farming systems that do not rely on routine antibiotic use.