

REPLY FROM COMMISSIONER BYRNE ON A BAN ON USE OF FLUOROQUINOLONE IN POULTRY, DEC 4, 2001

Dear Mrs Davies and Mr Silverglade,

I wish to thank you for your letter dated 7 November 2001 concerning the use of fluoroquinolones in poultry. I fully share your concern about the potential human health risk linked to the presence of fluoroquinolone resistant microorganisms in animals and foodstuffs.

The fight against increasing antimicrobial resistance has been recognized as a public health priority in the European Communities. In fact the European Commission has quite recently adopted a Community Strategy against antimicrobial resistance. This strategy acknowledges the multidisciplinary nature of the resistance problem and it comprises actions in all relevant sectors including public health, veterinary and phytosanitary areas.

As regards the fluoroquinolone resistant *Campylobacters*, I am aware of the recent risk assessment conducted by the Food and Drug Administration and the consequent proposal to withdraw fluoroquinolones from use in poultry. My services have been studying these documents with interest and, as you pointed out in your letter, the Committee for Veterinary Medicinal Products has already issued its reflection on the issue.

I agree with you on the fact that the latest information indicates that fluoroquinolone resistance in *Campylobacters* and *Salmonellas* is increasing. Therefore, I consider that it is now necessary that the human health impact of fluoroquinolone resistant *Salmonella* and *Campylobacters* strains derived from animals and foodstuffs be examined thoroughly. For this purpose my services are in the process of preparing a request to submit to the Scientific Committees of the European Communities for advice on the matter and on the possible measures to be taken. In view of the urgency of the matter we intend to request the Committees to deliver an opinion as early as possible in the new year.

In my opinion several risk management options can be envisaged. Apart from the restrictions on the use of fluoroquinolones in animals, as you proposed, the options include for example, the prudent use of these medicines and hygienic measures taken at farm and food production level to decrease the prevalence of these resistant pathogens. Each of these options has to be evaluated according to its benefits and disadvantages.