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Increasing use of antibiotics threatens public health in Denmark

Danish media have recently increased their focus on the growing use of antibiotics. The reason is that the use of antibiotics in agriculture is growing rapidly and the use is higher than ever.

Overuse of antibiotics makes the animals' bacteria resistant and these bacteria could infect us with diseases when we eat meat - mainly pork but also poultry - and also by contact between people. The risk is that bacteria can make us seriously ill, and these illnesses are difficult to treat.

It has become a nationwide health problem affecting the whole population. Hans Jørgen Kolmos, leading expert in clinical microbiology, predicts that we are heading toward a disaster if radical steps are not taken immediately. His concerns are shared by others. Robert Skov from Statens Serum Institut recommends avoiding all unnecessary use of antibiotics, especially because of the fact that infections do not only happen when people consume animal products, but also transfer from human to human.

This has led the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries to initiate the introduction of a so-called yellow card solution in which farmers and veterinarians are ordered to make a plan of action if the antibiotic use is remarkably high. This means that the problem is on the government's agenda. The Opposition additionally demands the development of a joint plan to prevent pig bacteria from becoming a public health issue.

Literature

- Børsen FødevareSundhed, "Resistente bakterier fra landbruget truer folkesundheden" ("Resistant bacteria from agriculture threatens the public health"), April 22, 2010

- Michael Rothenborg, "Resistente bakterier fra svin breder sig" ("Resistant bacteria from pigs spreads"), Politiken, April 25, 2010