

## RESPONSIBLE USE OF MEDICINES IN AGRICULTURE ALLIANCE

# RUMA

### **‘Antibiotic-free’ labelling**

Recent moves to label produce “Antibiotic-Free”, “Reared Without Antibiotics”, “No Antibiotics Ever” or similar have led RUMA to review its position as stated in June 2016, that it does not support the marketing of any meat or milk on the basis of such claims. Following this review, RUMA is re-stating its position that while it welcomes efforts to minimise antibiotic use through improved health and welfare, it does not support the use of these claims for marketing.

These are the reasons:

- Labelling products as “Antibiotic-Free” has the potential to mislead the consumer by implying that meat or milk not marketed as such contains antibiotics, which is not the case, as there are strict rules governing the administration of antibiotics to farm animals in the UK. These rules are enforced by Government surveillance to guarantee that in meat or milk sold for consumption, antibiotics are not present above a harmless trace level set as a maximum residue limit.
- If claims of “Antibiotic-Free”, “Reared Without Antibiotics”, “No Antibiotics Ever” or similar mean the animals from which the milk or meat is derived have not been given antibiotics in their lifetime, this presents the risk of driving unintended consequences. The main concern is causing unnecessary suffering and associated welfare issues by withholding treatment from sick animals in order to comply with the label, when in fact the animals should be treated. Equally, if sick animals are taken out of that supply chain and appropriately treated, then the wider system of production does still include antibiotic use, which may not be clear to consumers.
- Lastly, RUMA would like to clarify that while the terms “Antibiotic-Free”, “Reared Without Antibiotics”, “No Antibiotics Ever” or similar may be used to differentiate produce in some countries where use of antibiotics for growth promotion is still permitted, it is not relevant nor helpful in the EU where this practice has been banned since 2006