It’s so easy to blame ‘farmacies’

A

n interesting new movement
among certain sects of foodies
has taken root. These foodies
seem to think that farmers and
ranchers have the extraordinary
ability to keep consumers healthy.
“Pay the doctor to make us
better, but we should really pay
the farmer to keep us healthy.”
Quotations like this are often turned
into memes and passed around on
social media as basic tenets of this
movement.

What has surprised me the most
about this movement, though, is that
some industry groups have even
started to join in with this train of
thought.

When you hear these claims — like,
“Medicine is not health care; food
is health care. Medicine is sick care” —
it implies that the food we eat can be
solely culpable for our wellness.
Of course, a balanced diet is an
essential part of our overall well-
being. However, aren’t exercise,
nutrition and attitude also factors
in our comprehensive care?

We live in a time where information
is at our fingertips and where
resources are just a phone call or
Google search away.

Don’t limit vets’ ability to do their jobs

Veterinarians have earned the trust
and respect of food animal producers,
government agencies, educators, in-
dustry and the public.

There is no evidence to suggest that
a veterinarian’s primary motivation is
anything other than to do what is in
the best interest of their patients.

U.S. food-supply veterinarians take
very seriously their dual responsibil-
ity of ensuring not only production
animals’ health and welfare but also
that of the world’s food supply.

Ensuring that the public can rely on
safe and wholesome food products is
more than just a job for them; it is a
passion rooted in their desire to pro-
tect and enhance both animal and
human health.

There is no place that I would ever
limit vets’ ability to do their jobs.

Dear Editor:
The American Veterinary Medical
Assoc. (AVMA) has long advocated that
greater veterinary oversight of the use
of antimicrobials on the farm would
benefit human and animal health.

However, we believe Dr. Richard
Raymond oversimplifies this extreme-
ly complex issue while at the same
time unfairly impugning the profes-
sional reputation of veterinarians (in
the Feb. 2 Feedstuffs viewpoint “Will
FDA antibiotic rules change game?”). AVMA believes that the implementa-
tion of the Food & Drug Administra-
ton’s guidance documents #209 and
#213, as well as changes to veterinary
feed directive regulations, will best
serve animal, human and food safety
by phasing out production uses of an-
tibiotics important in human medicine
and phasing in veterinary oversight.

Other proposals intended to pre-
serve the efficacy of antimicrobials
for human health, such as legislative
changes, have the potential to harm
animal health and welfare, as well as
food safety, by disallowing important
veterinary uses of these drugs.

Dr. Raymond’s commentary ques-
tions veterinarians’ motivation and
ethics by suggesting that the appeal
of profits might compromise their
professional judgment. This is pure
speculation based only on perception,
and we take strong exception to the
suggestion.

Veterinarians make recommenda-
tions for antibiotic use on farms based
on their medical expertise, our Princi-
ples of Veterinary Medical Ethics and
the Veterinarian’s Oath.

Like every business, veterinarians
must make a profit to stay in business,
but we object to the suggestion that
a profit motive would compromise our
professional judgment.

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as an adult, her lifelong passion. Read
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For the majority of the population,
even those not connected to the
internet, resources are available to
educate and empower us on our
health and food choices.

Despite these resources, a certain
segment of the population finds it
easier to simply blame others for
their state of health.

Why is that?

Perhaps our fast-paced, modern
lives have changed our priorities and
our societal norms?

We now outsourc e and abrogate
tasks that historically would have
been part of our routines, from
cooking our own meals to walking our
own dogs.

Our culture now caters to and
thrusts on convenience, but these
accommodations come at a price.
This lack of self-sufficiency has made
us irresponsible. Like the disconnect
between the farm and the
fork, we now inadvertently created a
disconnect between personal responsibility and our own health.

Instead of engaging and realizing
that how we treat ourselves and
what we choose to put in our bodies
matters, we simply outsourced that
responsibility to the farmer, the
restaurant or the doctor.

As a result of industry groups
joining this movement and inferring
that farms are now “farmacies,” it
has become even easier to vilify and
blame farmers for our own unhealthy
habits.

It is important to remember that
farmers produce what is demanded
of them. Farmers and ranchers grow
what will earn them an income, not
what they think is healthy or what
they think consumers should buy.

Farmers and ranchers already have
plenty of obligations to their crops
and animals, so our industry groups
must be careful.

While I do believe that these groups
have the farmer’s best interest at
heart and are attempting to advocate
that connecting to our agricultural
roots is a beneficial movement for
society, it can be a slippery slope
between knowing your farmer and
blaming him.

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