



Shrimps with antibiotics



Photo: © Pradeep 717

DOUBLE STANDARDS



With aggressive marketing, drug manufacturers contribute to the misuse and overuse of antibiotics. The pharmaceutical giant Zoetis supported the ban on reserve antibiotics such as colistin in animal fattening in the USA – at the same time it continued advertising and selling this drug in India as a growth promoter.

Antibiotics are essential in India’s rapidly growing poultry production. But even aquafarms can’t operate without them. The drugs are added to the water as a preventive measure against disease. The amount of antibiotics used in shrimp farming is particularly high. The shrimps are exported worldwide – also to the EU.

“There are guidelines on the use of antibiotics in export-oriented shrimp farming. There are no specifications for fish farming. In other words, we protect the health of our export customers, but don’t care about our local consumers.”

Amit Khurana, environmental activist, India



Photo: © Pawar Pooja

FORBIDDEN BY THE STATE

The use of the reserve antibiotic colistin in animals has been banned in India since July 2019. The drug, which is important in some forms of human medicine, is used worldwide in industrial animal fattening. In Germany, too, it is still used on animals – despite warnings from the World Health Organization.



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Make way!



FROM ANIMAL TO HUMAN

Resistant pathogens can be transmitted from animals to humans. MRSA is a resistant pathogen that infects the skin and mucous membranes. It often occurs in conventionally farmed animals for fattening – and subsequently also among farmers or butchers.

In Germany, more and more animals are being kept in less and less space. 99% of all German chickens come from fattening facilities with more than 10,000 birds. On average, there are around 30,000 animals per farm – in Saxony-Anhalt, the figure is as high as 143,000. If individual animals fall ill, all the animals are immediately treated with antibiotics via the feed or water. This mass use of antibiotics causes high resistance rates among broilers and turkeys.

“In chicken-fattening farms, resistant bacteria sometimes get into the pipes that distribute water to the animals. Via the animals, the pathogens can then enter the food chain and end up in our kitchens.”

Reinhild Benning, Germanwatch



SPECIES-APPROPRIATE REARING

The amount of antibiotics used in animal fattening can best be reduced by keeping animals in a species-appropriate manner. Breeding must not be geared to efficiency alone. Robust breeds promise lower yields, but are less susceptible to disease.



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Available over the counter



RESISTANT WILD ANIMALS



The meat of wild animals such as kudu and wildebeest is traded as an expensive delicacy on the meat market. However, this meat is sometimes contaminated with resistant germs. The animals become infected in areas used by livestock for grazing.

In South Africa, many antibiotics are sold without veterinary control. Farmers in remote regions treat their animals as they see fit. This leads to high consumption of antibiotics and makes it difficult to detect and contain resistance.

“The biggest challenge is the farmers’ lack of knowledge. If we want to make progress, we need to include them in the control of antibiotic resistance.”

Nenene Qekwana, vet, South Africa

CONTROL OF THE MARKET?

The South African Department of Health plans to register all over-the-counter antibiotic substances. These will then only be available on prescription. However, the manufacturers of veterinary medicines would like to prevent this. Instead, they say salespeople should be better trained.



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Not enough vets



SERIOUS PROBLEM



There are only about 250 vets in the whole of Tanzania – far too few for the many farm animals in the country. By comparison, in Germany there are over 11,500.

Nearly 1.7 million smallholder farmers in Tanzania produce poultry for the domestic market. They often use antibiotics. Actually, only vets are allowed to prescribe antibiotics. But vets are hard to find. And the sale of medicines for animals is hardly monitored.

“When it comes to medicines, farmers rely on their experience or tips they pick up from colleagues. People who eat these foods are consuming antibiotic residues at the same time. This promotes the spread of resistance.”

Robinson Mdegela, vet, Tanzania



Photo: © Fotolia

PARAVETS

Especially in rural areas, there are hardly any practising vets. As a result, so-called ‘paravets’ are trained in the villages. These veterinary assistants advise the farmers and give them what they need to treat the animals.



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