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It is interesting to watch what is happening in Europe with the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture. On March 25th, the European Commission proposed changes in regulations that will end the use of nearly all antibiotics in animal feed by 2006. The proposed change will end the use of lavophospholipol, salinomycin, avilamycin and monensin, all of which are currently used to promote growth in livestock. The use of other antibiotics that are also used in human medicine (avoparcin, bacitracin, spiramycin, virginiamycin and tylosin) were already phased out in 1997-1998.

A study by the European Federation of Animal Health showed that Europe's livestock industry used 4,700 metric tons of antibiotics in 1999 - about a third of all the antibiotics used in the European Union. About 3,900 mg of this went to aid recovery of sick animals; about 786 or 6% of all antibiotics fed were used as growth promoters. The commission also said that the new rules will apply to imports, which raises questions as to whether animal products that have involved feeding of antibiotics will be allowed into the Union. (from Ian Elliot, in Feedstuffs 74:1-3, April 1, 2002).