

Study: Meat producers ignore calls for reform

By Eliza Barclay, NPR

Five years ago, a landmark report excoriated the animal agriculture industry's practices and laid out a roadmap for how it could do better. But in the years since, the problems are just as bad – and maybe even worse.

That's the conclusion of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. This week, the center scolded the industry again with a review of how it has fared in the years since the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production released its original report.

These pigs, newly weaned from their mothers, are at their most vulnerable stage of life. They're getting antibiotics in their water to ward off bacterial infection.

"From a regulatory, or legislative, standpoint, we have actually regressed on many of these issues in the last five years," says Bob Martin, who served as executive director of the original Pew commission, which included policymakers and scientists. Martin is now a program director at the Center for a Livable Future.

Though the Pew commission is not a foodie household name, its 2008 report has subtly shaped many consumers' view of how our food animals are produced. It's not the rosy view – it's the highly critical one.

Back then, the commission identified the most worrisome systemic problems of producing 9.8 billion food animals every year in the U.S. It called out the animal agriculture industry for the excessive use of medically important antibiotics, particularly the industry's habit of giving animals low doses

for non-therapeutic uses like growth promotion.

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