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## FDA withdraws last arsenic-based food animal drug from marketplace

*Five years after evidence showed drug converts to cancer-causing compound in chickens, humans fed finally act*

by *Sustainable Food News*  
April 2, 2015



Arsenic-based Nitarsone used to prevent blackhead disease in turkeys, chickens exiting market and cooked chicken breast, and that more than 70 percent of all U.S. chickens raised for meat were fed arsenic.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said Wednesday it will withdraw approval of the last remaining arsenic-based drug used in food animal production.

Arsenic has been used for decades as a feed additive for food animals to help fight infections as well as induce faster weight gain with less feed, and create a market-desirable color in meat, especially from chickens and turkeys.

However, studies have shown that arsenic-containing compounds and inorganic arsenic - a known carcinogen - are present in both raw

A 2009 petition from the [Center for Food Safety](#) and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) to the FDA provided further evidence that organic arsenic compounds - like those added to animal feed - convert to cancer-causing, inorganic arsenic inside of chickens, in manure-treated soil and in humans.

After four years of the agency's inaction, CFS, IATP, and and seven other groups sued in 2013, prompting the FDA to call for the withdrawal of 98 out of 101 arsenic-based animal drugs.

The [agency's announcement Wednesday](#) calls for the withdrawal of nitarsone, manufactured by pharmaceutical company Zoetis (formerly Pfizer), from the marketplace by the end of 2015. The FDA also said Zoetis would suspend sales of the drug by this fall.

Nitarsone is approved for the prevention of blackhead disease (*histomoniasis*) in turkeys and chickens, but is predominantly used in turkeys, FDA said.

Market approvals for three other arsenic-based animal drugs: roxarsone, arsanilic acid and carbasone, were withdrawn by the FDA in February 2014.

“The withdrawal of these harmful feed additives is a major victory for consumers and the health of our food system. It is unfortunate that it took over five years of intense pressure from outside groups, yet in the end, we are pleased that FDA listened to our scientific objections and is now ridding arsenic from our meat supply,” said Paige Tomaselli, CFS senior attorney.

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