

California Law

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship (AUS) program was created by SB 27 (Hill, 2015) to fulfill the mandates set forth by California Food and Agriculture Code (FAC) Chapter 4.5 Sections 14400-14408.

FAC Sections 14405-14406 mandate that CDFA gather representative data on antibiotic sales and usage, antimicrobial resistant bacteria and livestock management practices, in addition to Veterinary Feed Directives (VFDs). Section 14407 prevents information disclosure unless the data is aggregated to prevent the identification of an individual farm or business or is reported to the Veterinary Medical Board solely for the purposes of enforcing the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act.



About AUS

The CDFA AUS program collects data on antibiotic use and animal health practices to inform the development of voluntary antibiotic stewardship guidelines and educational resources on best management practices. The purpose of this guidance is to assist producers and veterinarians in reducing the use of medically important antibiotics, while optimizing animal health, for the more than 60 livestock species and production types important to California.



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<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/AUS/>



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Confidentiality in Data Reporting



How is data confidentiality maintained?

Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship (AUS) collects and develops a wide range of information, based on different data collection methods and industries of interest. AUS only collects personal or uniquely identifying information that enhances the data gathered to fulfill AUS's monitoring mandates.

Data confidentiality is further established by:

- Identifying whether information held by AUS presents a risk for individual or farm identification;
- Assessing the risk of identity recognition through data reporting;
- Taking steps to de-identify data, including data aggregation and data masking methods to prevent re-identification;
- Conducting additional reviews, including legal processing, prior to release of aggregated data.



How is information aggregated?

Reportable data will be aggregated by similar characteristics or categories that describe the information and allow for comparisons. For example, data may be aggregated by county, industry type, herd or flock size, or time period. Additional aggregation may be required when the detail level of data could allow for identification of an individual farm or business. Further aggregation is achieved by putting the data into a more generalized category to prevent the disclosure of identifying information.

How is data further protected?

- When initial aggregation is insufficient to protect the identity of an entity, further aggregation or data masking methods will be applied;
- AUS will categorize information into groups denoted as "Not independently reported" (NIR), or similar terminology;
- These methods of data protection are mirrored from the FDA and U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service to protect data confidentiality.

Why is it important to provide confidentiality?

- Protecting the confidentiality of individual farms and businesses is mandated by FAC 14407 and aligns with the National Action Plan on Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria;
- Some data generated through AUS activities - such as antimicrobial use and resistance - are collected through voluntary participation. Maintaining confidentiality in the process of gathering and reporting voluntary data encourages broader participation in the future monitoring efforts.

