Antibiotic resistance is a hot topic, the intersection of medicine and culture where everyone can criticize someone else. Pediatricians criticize farmers, for example, ironically without noting that they are the biggest culprits in over-prescribing antibiotics.

And Consumer Reports can criticize the meat industry, ironically without noting that they promote foodborne illness when they suggest that methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is making people sick in conventional meat, even though MRSA is not a foodborne pathogen and that conventional meat is less likely to make anyone sick than organic meat is.

How did they go so wrong? They did a review...of their own analyses. Yes, they sent their own lab out to prove that there were higher levels of "superbug" contamination in conventional meat, and then they reviewed all of those internal analyses and wrote a report confirming they were correct in what they claimed in advance. That's the exact opposite of the scientific method. They don't stop there. To scare people into believing they care about public health, they quote strawman statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about "superbugs" and then statistics about foodborne illnesses and then talk about tests that don't show a connection between what they studied and what the CDC is worried about.

Who besides us believes that is a bogus premise? The entire United States Food and Drug Administration, who say it is completely wrong to claim that a bacterium that doesn't cause foodborne disease, and has natural resistances, as is true for Enterococcus which Consumer Reports also invokes, is somehow a "superbug" in conventional meat. Putting it plainly, Consumer Reports is simply promoting hysteria when they claim meat is causing antibiotic resistance while 80 percent of human Salmonella isolates are not resistant to the antibiotics they tested and multi-drug resistance has not changed in the last decade.
They shouldn't capitalize on a popular term like "superbug" for dramatic effect, but they do. It's anti-science clickbait. Bacteria develop resistance in nature all of the time, that's why they have lasted for about a billion years. They are going to develop resistance to everything, that does not make a "superbug" every time it happens.

The take-home message when groups are spinning in-house studies to try and create a war on a food type? Exactly the opposite of what they intended. Instead of what they set out to show, their data instead show that if you want E. Coli in ground beef or Campylobacter in ground turkey, conventional meat is actually a terrible way to get it. Maybe you should buy organic food instead.

When you want to buy a toaster, Consumer Reports is probably still a trusted guide. But for science and health insight, stick with us.