

# Involve Your Veterinarian

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Your veterinarian plays an important role in preventing, diagnosing and treating disease in your herd. Selecting the proper treatment depends on accurately diagnosing the problem, so work with your local veterinarian to develop a health care program designed to fit your specific needs. With the new FDA feed antibiotic regulations in place, it is more important than ever to have a veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) with your veterinarian.

An appropriate VCPR will exist when:

- The veterinarian has assumed the responsibilities for making clinical judgments on your farm.
- The veterinarian has examined your animals within the past 12 months, or made annual visits to the premises where the animals are kept.
- The veterinarian is readily available or has arranged for emergency follow-up evaluation in the event of an adverse reaction to the medication.

## Extra-label Drug Use

Using any medication in a manner other than listed on the label is considered extra-label drug use. Extra-label drug use can only be prescribed by a veterinarian, and these requirements must be met:

- A veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) must exist between the veterinarian and producer.
  - The veterinarian and producer must make sure the animal is properly identified, assign meat and milk withdrawal times, and abide by these withdrawal times to ensure no illegal residues occur.
- A cattle producer cannot use drugs (including OTC drugs) in an extra-label manner without a veterinarian's prescription. This is **off-label** and **illegal**.
- Administering products according to label directions includes dosage, route of administration, reason for administration, adhering to proper withdrawal times, etc.
- Veterinarians are even prohibited from using some antibiotics/medications in an extra-label manner.
- Extra-label use of feed medications is prohibited.
- Extra-label use of hormones is prohibited.
- Use of any estrogenic compound in a food animal is prohibited.

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**Off-label** use of vaccines is not illegal, but such use will reduce the efficacy of the vaccine, as well as release the manufacturer from any product liability. In other words, if a vaccine is stored and administered according to all label directions and supported by proper documentation, then in the case of an adverse event related to the product, the manufacturer might be liable. If you choose to use a vaccine in an off-label manner, then the manufacturers are released from all product liability. So, to maintain maximum product efficacy and product liability it is strongly recommended to use all vaccines according to label directions.

## Treatment Decisions

Even with the best herd management, some animals will become sick. If you are not certain about the most effective treatment options, include your veterinarian in the decision-making process.

The decision to treat them should be based on certain criteria:

- Will the animal return to a healthy, productive state without treatment?
- Will treatment return the animal to a healthy, productive state?
- What treatment best fits the disease and herd management?
- What are the withdrawal times once the animal is treated?
- Should the animal be sold?
- Would euthanasia be a better option?

## Storing Drugs on Your Operation

Medications require certain guidelines for storage. Drug performance declines if the expiration date has passed, if the storage temperature is too hot or too cold, or if the drugs have been improperly exposed to air or light. Also, it is considered extra-label use if the product is administered past the expiration date. All the information you need to properly store any animal health product should be on the label of the drug container.

1. Always check the expiration date/lot number on the label at purchase.
2. Do your homework when purchasing vaccines. Only purchase the amount needed to work the cattle you have available. Especially when using modified live vaccines. Once mixed, they need to be used and not stored for later use.
3. Some drugs, and all vaccines, need to be refrigerated at 40 F to 50 F and must not be frozen. Keep an accurate thermometer in your refrigerator to monitor the temperature.
4. When vaccinating, mark syringes to identify which syringe is for which vaccine. Never mix killed vaccines with modified live. This will render the vaccines useless. Use disposable syringes for medications, and properly dispose of the syringes when finished. Use clean needles to draw contents from multidose bottles. Change needles every animal to minimize disease spread and drug contamination. Do not store medication in syringes.
5. Avoid exposing vaccines and other medicines to direct sunlight. This may degrade the product. Use an insulated cooler for storing syringes and drugs while working on cattle to avoid sunlight and maintain the proper temperature.
6. Collect used needles in a rigid plastic container. Dispose of them by returning them to your veterinarian. Destroy disposable syringes so they cannot be reused or misused. **Read labels.** Some drugs and vaccine containers require incineration before disposal. Used needles, scalpels, etc. are considered medical waste and must be handled and disposed of in accordance with laws which govern them. See [safeneedledisposal.org](http://safeneedledisposal.org)
7. Consult your local veterinarian regarding any questions on proper use of medications.

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Medications will be a necessary part of any herd health management program. Involving your veterinarian with making decisions on the use of these medications will assist your operation in the health of your animals. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at [lstrick5@utk.edu](mailto:lstrick5@utk.edu) or 865-974-3538.



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