

It isn't too early to begin planning for the new year

Answers to some common questions on Veterinary Feed Directives

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For many of us, a new year's resolution may be to change something that's been put on the back-burner once we open a new calendar. Or they may also be something that we think of in the spur-of-the-moment as the clock winds down, but really don't have any intention of holding our iron to the fire in order for that change to become a normal part of our everyday lives. As the new year approaches – and yes, I realize it's September, not December, but we'll come back to that in a minute – there's one change that will become a normal part of many of our everyday lives – it's that three letter acronym – VFD. The Veterinary Feed Directive, or more commonly referred to as VFD, is used to describe the upcoming federal regulatory changes that will affect how we use some antibiotics to medicate feed and water. Although there are a number of other resources available on the subject, much confusion remains. The following questions and answers will help to clarify some of the confusion, as well as straighten-out some common misconceptions.

Q: What type of antibiotics will be affected?

A: All antibiotics that are used in human medicine will be affected by these changes. If the antibiotic is used in human medicine, it will no longer be able to be used for general production purposes, such as increased rate of weight gain (growth promotion) or feed efficiency. These antibiotics will still be able to be used for treatment, prevention or control of disease in accordance with their label, but these uses will require veterinary oversight in the form of a VFD. Antibiotics that are not used in human medicine, such as the ionophores (Rumensin, Bovatec and Cattlyst), will not be affected, and will continue to be available as they have in the past.

Q: What specific drugs will be transitioning to VFDs?

A: Although the FDA has published a list of all drugs that will be affected by these changes, the specific drugs that are approved for use in beef cattle that will be affected include chlortetracycline (CTC) with or without sulfamethazine, oxytetracycline (OTC) with or without neomycin, tylosin, and virginiamycin.

Q: What specific products will be transitioning to VFDs?

A: The specific products that are marketed for beef cattle that will be affected include Aureomycin, CLTC, CTC, Chloratet, Chlorachel, ChlorMax, Deracin, Inchlor, Pennchlor, Pfichlor, Aureo S, Aureomix S, Pennchlor S, TM, OXTC, Pennox, Terramycin, Neo-Oxy, Neo-Terramycin, Tylan, Tylovet, Stafac, and V-max.

Q: How will these changes affect your access to antibiotics?

A: Antibiotics transitioning to VFD status will no longer be available over-the-counter, meaning that you will no longer be able to stop by your local retailer and pick them up. Their purchase will require a Veterinary Feed Directive form that was filled out and signed by your veterinarian.

Q: Do these changes apply to injectables?

A: NO! I'll say it again...NO! These changes only apply to antibiotics that are used to medicated feed, milk replacer or water. Injectable antibiotics will not be affected by these changes, and will continue to be available over-the-counter if they were previously available without a prescription. If an injectable previously required a prescription, its purchase will continue to require a prescription.

Q: When will these changes go into effect?

A: This changes will become effective as of January 1st, 2017. As of that time, you will no longer be able to use drugs that are transitioning to VFDs without a valid VFD that was issued by your veterinarian.

Q: What is required in order for a veterinarian to write a VFD?

A: In order for your veterinarian to write a VFD, you must have a valid Veterinarian-Client-Patient relationship (VCPR) in place. The veterinarian may or may not choose to evaluate the animals prior to writing the VFD, but regardless, the VCPR must be in place. Once received, you must keep your copy of the VFD form for a minimum of 2 years.

Q: Why are you bringing this topic up again in September?

A: If you haven't begun doing so already, now is the time to begin planning. Establishing a VCPR can be as easy as having the vet visit your farm once a year, whether it be for a veterinary emergency, at vaccination time, during pregnancy diagnosis, and the list goes on. Now is also the time to ask your current feed retailer if these changes are going to affect the availability of medicated feeds that you've used in the past. If you will no longer be able to purchase them there, you still have time to check around to find somewhere that plans to market them.

Q: Where can I find more information on VFDs?

A: UT Extension publication PB 1837, which can be found online at www.utbeef.com or at <https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1837.pdf> provides a detailed overview of these upcoming federal regulatory changes for medicated feeds.