

Maryland 4-H Animal Science Program Guidebook

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION
Solutions in your community



Information about the Veterinary Feed Directive for 4-H Members and Families

General Information

Judicious use of medically important antimicrobials in food-producing animals has been a topic of growing interest and much discussion in recent years. Effective January 1, 2017 under the Veterinary Feed Directive final ruling it will be illegal to use medically important antimicrobials for production purposes (i.e., growth promotion and feed efficiency) and animal producers will need to obtain authorization from a licensed veterinarian to use medically important antimicrobials when needed for treatment, control, and prevention of specific animal health problems.

It is important for food-animal producers, including 4-H members with food-animal projects, to know when and how medically important antimicrobials may be used in feed or water when considered necessary for assuring animal health (therapeutic uses). Many antimicrobials that have been available over-the-counter (OTC) will now only be available for use with a valid Rx script (for water soluble products – “medicated drinking water”) or with a Veterinary Feed Directive (for products used in or on feed – “medicated feed”).

What is the Veterinary Feed Directive?

First, the term Veterinary Feed Directive or VFD can be used to reference regulations regarding a category of certain animal drugs used in or on animal food (animal feed) which is regulated by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) final rule is an important part of the FDA’s overall strategy to ensure the judicious use of medically important antimicrobials in food-producing animals to reduce antimicrobial resistance for those drugs deemed medically important in human health. The final ruling helps to ensure that antimicrobial drugs are used for therapeutic use in animals rather than production purposes.

The term Veterinary Feed Directive or VFD can also be used to reference the authorization document issued by a licensed veterinarian necessary for obtaining and using the class of antimicrobials determined to be medically important (considered important for therapeutic use in humans). The VFD is different than an Rx script which is also issued by a licensed veterinarian. The classification or mode of use indicated on the label of the antimicrobial will determine which type of authorization is required from your veterinarian.

What is a “VFD drug”?

A “VFD drug” is a drug intended for use in or on animal feed that is limited to use under the professional supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

VFD amendments affect antimicrobials that are determined to be medically important. Antimicrobials that are not medically important under the current ruling include:

- Ionophores (monensin, lasalocid, etc.)
- Bacitracin (BMD, bacitracin zinc)
- Bambermycins
- Carbadox
- Other drugs (that are not antimicrobials), for example:
 - Anthelmintics: Coumaphos, Fenbendazole, Ivermectin
 - Beta agonists: Ractopamine, Zilpaterol
 - Coccidiostats: Clopidol, Decoquinat, Diclazuril

To get the current list of the antimicrobials that are on the VFD drug list visit the FDA websites listed at the end of this information sheet.

Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)

The Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) final rule requires veterinarians to issue all VFDs within the context of a veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR), and specifies the key elements that define a VCPR. These key elements include that the veterinarian engage with the client (i.e., the animal producer) to assume responsibility for making clinical judgments about patient (i.e., animal) health, have sufficient knowledge of the patient by virtue of patient examination and/or visits to the facility where the patient is managed, and provide for any necessary follow-up evaluation or care.

What does this mean for 4-H Members?

After January 1, 2017, animal producers (includes 4-H animal project members) will be unable to go to feed distributors to purchase certain antimicrobials or medicated feeds containing VFD drugs without an Rx script or VFD from their veterinarian. Feed distributors may also discontinue carrying medicated feeds that you might have purchased in the past, or feeds may now be sold as unmedicated or have alternative medications that are not affected by the VFD final rule.

If animal producers need to use antimicrobials in routes other than as a feed additive, they will need to work with their veterinarian to get a Rx script. Antimicrobials that are put in water are regulated differently and require a Rx script from a veterinarian, not a VFD. Medically important antimicrobials cannot be used for growth promotion, but can only be used according to the label for controlling & treating diseases.

- As we become more judicious in the use of antimicrobials with food-animals, it will become even more important for animal producers to monitor the health of their animals on a daily basis.
- After January 1, 2017 a valid Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR) will be required to obtain a VFD or Rx script. Each state defines the conditions (or adopts the federally-defined conditions) required for a valid VCPR. You should talk and work with your veterinarian about these new requirements.

- It is the animal producer's responsibility to work with their veterinarian to obtain a VFD when needed. Producers may only dispense VFD drugs for therapeutic use and must do so according to the approved label, which includes dose and duration. No provisions allow for use of VFD drugs to promote growth and efficiency. Producers cannot use the medication after the expiration of the VFD.
- When a VFD is issued, the animal producer will receive a copy of the VFD directive and the veterinarian will keep a copy and provide a copy to the feed mill or distributor. All parties must keep record of the VFD for a minimum of two years. Be diligent about keeping your records!

Some example scenarios:

- If your calf has scours, you will no longer be able to purchase scours medication containing neomycin & oxytetracycline at your feed store. You will need to work with your veterinarian to get a prescription (for undiluted oral suspension, diluted with water or injectable) or Veterinary Feed Directive (if used as a medication in milk replacer when permitted by the label).
- If your pig has pneumonia, you will no longer be able to purchase medication containing chlortetracycline (like Aureomycin) over the counter at your feed store. You will need to work with your veterinarian to get a Veterinary Feed Directive if used as a medicated pellet.
- If you were using a medicated feed to promote the growth of your market animals, you will no longer be able to purchase that feed at your local feed store as you will be unable to use any medically important antimicrobial in your feed to promote growth.

Sources (and additional information found on the FDA website):

Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD)

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm071807.htm>

Veterinary Feed Directive Producer Requirements

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm455413.htm>

Veterinary Feed Directive Final Rule and Next Steps

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm449019.htm>

Guidance for Industry: Veterinary Feed Directive Common Format Questions and Answers

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/GuidanceComplianceEnforcement/GuidanceforIndustry/UCM474640.pdf>

Drugs Transitioning from Over-the-Counter (OTC) to Prescription (Rx) Status

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm482106.htm>

Drugs Transitioning from Over-the-Counter (OTC) to Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) Status

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm482107.htm>

NOTE: The term "antimicrobials" include all agents that act against all types of microorganisms – bacteria (antibacterial), viruses (antiviral), fungi (antifungal) and protozoa (antiprotozoal).