Medicated Feed Use for Minor Species

Frequently Asked Questions for Producers

What is a minor species?

Minor species are defined as animals other than cattle, horses, swine, chickens, turkeys, dogs and cats. This includes sheep, goats, farmed deer and honey bees, among others.

Why are these species treated differently than major species?

Because most drug research is done in major species, medications are often not labeled for use in minor species. In addition, new drugs for minor species are too costly to manufacture, limiting the number of treatment options. Due to these challenges, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) created regulations that made more medications available for minor species and altered compliance policies to allow for the extralabel use of medicated feeds for these species.

How can I get medicated feed for my minor species animal?

In order to use a medicated feed in a minor species, you must have established a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR). A VCPR is a working relationship between a veterinarian and a producer. The veterinarian's primary role is to advise and guide the producer (the client) in determining which medications are appropriate for their animals (the patients). If appropriate, the medicated feed would be provided under extralabel use.

What is extralabel use?

Extralabel use of medications is when a veterinarian specifies instructions that are different than the manufacturer's label. Extralabel use of medicated feeds is "limited to therapeutic treatment when the health of an animal is threatened and suffering or death may result from failure to treat. It is unacceptable under any circumstances to use a medicated feed in an extralabel manner for improving rate of weight gain, feed efficiency, or other production purposes."

As of January 1, 2017, some antibiotics used in feed previously purchased over-the-counter have become Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) drugs.

What is a VFD drug?

Drug classifications and methods of distribution are determined by the FDA. A VFD drug is a medically important (determined by the FDA) antibiotic approved for use in or on animal feed. In order to use feed containing a VFD drug, a written order by a licensed veterinarian is required.

What is a VFD order?

A VFD order is a written statement issued by a licensed veterinarian giving producers permission to use feed that contains antibiotics as written by the licensed veterinarian. A requirement of the VFD policy is a VCPR must be in place.

How do producers know if a drug is a VFD drug?

Labels of VFD drugs must have the the following statement: "Caution: Federal law restricts medicated feed containing this VFD drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian." The FDA is also maintaining a list of VFD drugs on their website. For the most up-to-date version, visit www.michigan.gov/vfd.

What is the "expiration date" on the VFD order?

The expiration date on the VFD order is the last day the VFD feed can be fed and the duration of the order is not to exceed six months. In order for feed mills to fill requests for medicated feed, a current VFD order must be on file.

Once producers have a VFD order where can it be filled?

You can fill a VFD order at any mill, retailer or other establishment listed as a distributor with the FDA, find the list online at www.michigan.gov/vfd.

How is this being enforced?

According to the FDA, medicated feeds for minor species are a low enforcement priority if they are being used in a way that meets the conditions in the FDA's *Compliance Policy Guide 615.115*. This policy does not make extra-label use legal or allow unapproved medicated feeds to be marketed for these uses.

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For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/vfd.