

Veterinary Feed Directive

Frequently Asked Questions for Producers

In 1999, the Animal Drug Availability Act of 1996 implemented a new category of drugs called veterinary feed directive (VFD). The VFD category is a part of FDA's overall directive to ensure the judicious use of human medically important antibiotics. Recently, the VFD category was expanded to include medically important antibiotics fed to animals and is defined in FDA Guidance Document #213. The revised VFD policy puts into place important control factors dictating the appropriate use of feed-grade antibiotics.

How will the VFD impact producers?

Because drug companies have voluntarily removed label claims from medically important feed-grade antibiotics for enhancing growth or improving feed efficiency from feed labels, there will be some feeds which will no longer be sold. However, feed-grade antibiotics will be available to use for therapeutic (prevention, control, treatment) reasons, under the direction of a veterinarian with a VFD order. Producers will have to work with their veterinarian to determine the best course of treatment for their animals on a case by case basis.

Are all antibiotics now considered VFD drugs?

Not all antibiotics will be considered VFD drugs. The use of injectable antibiotics will not be affected by the revised Act. At this time, FDA has only moved antibiotics essential to human medicine and being fed to animals to VFD status.

According to FDA Guidance Document #213, water soluble antibiotics, which are important to human medicine, now require a prescription from a veterinarian.

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 VCPR?

A veterinarian-client-patient relationship (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).

When will this take effect?

The expansion of the order went into effect on October 1, 2015; however, only a small number of antibiotics (tilmicosin, florfenicol, and avilamycin) were affected. Full implementation of FDA Guidance #213, including phasing numerous over-the-counter feed-grade antibiotics to VFD status, will take place on January 1, 2017.

What do producers need to do to follow the veterinary feed directive?

In order to be compliant, producers must only feed VFD drugs to animals if they have a valid VCPR with a licensed veterinarian who gives them a VFD order. Producers must completely feed the VFD drug feed prior to the expiration date on the VFD order and keep a copy of the VFD order for two years. If inspected by the FDA, producers must be able to provide VFD orders for FDA inspections, when requested.

How do producers get a VFD drug or prescription?

Producers must work with a licensed veterinarian with whom they have an established VCPR. The veterinarian will write either a prescription for antibiotics delivered through water or a VFD order for antibiotics delivered through feed to treat their animals.

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 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.

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 on at www.michigan.gov/vfd.