



Issue Brief

The FDA's New Veterinary Feed Directive – Dairy Q & A Fact Sheet

by Ben Laine

Background

The latest Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) Final Rule was issued in June 2015 by the Food and Drug Administration in response to the public perception that the use of antibiotics in animal feed may be leading to antibiotic resistance. The FDA's new rules will eliminate the use of feed-based antimicrobials for improved growth and feed efficiency if the antimicrobials are considered to be “medically important” for humans.

Going forward, in order to purchase any antimicrobials considered medically important in feed, a supplier will need a written VFD order from a veterinarian. The veterinarian will need to have a legitimate veterinarian-client relationship (the definition of which varies by state), and the prescribed antimicrobials cannot be approved for any other use beyond what is on the label.

What are the major changes coming with the new rule?

- The requirement of an established veterinarian-client relationship, and a written VFD order from a veterinarian to obtain any VFD feed.
- The removal of references to “improved growth rates” and “enhanced feed efficiency” from labels, and the prohibition of extra-label use.

When do the rules take effect?

- The new rules will go into effect January 1, 2017.
- Any drugs on-hand at that point which would fall under the new rules do not need to be discarded, but will require a documented VFD for continued use.

How will this affect dairy?

- The impact on dairy producers should be limited. Ionophores, which are the most commonly used antimicrobials in dairy operations, are not considered medically important for human use, and do not fall under the VFD regulations.
- The most significant impact to dairy will be on medicated milk replacers. Milk replacers containing Oxytetracycline and Neomycin will now require a VFD and must be used as directed on the label.

What steps should dairy producers take?

- Most dairy producers already have a relationship with a veterinarian, but should establish one if they do not.
- Producers should work with their veterinarian to understand the specifics of changes on their operation, and discuss alternatives to practices that will be affected.