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New Rules for OTC Livestock Antibiotics

On September 14, 2018, the Food and Drug Administration, (FDA), unveiled a 5-year action plan for supporting antimicrobial stewardship in veterinary settings. The FDA has been implementing this plan to control antimicrobial resistance through the cautious use of animals within our community and food supply. This process is driven by the concept that medically important antimicrobial drugs should only be used in animals when necessary for treating, controlling or preventing specific diseases. The FDA places the responsibility under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

The emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria is rampant in the human population. Veterinarians are especially trained in the appropriate and best use of antibiotics. Which drug, dosage, and duration are likely best for the animal are all part of the equation. Vets can provide care for animals while still contributing to the benefit of society in general by reducing antibiotic resistance.

In June of 2021, the FDA announced that all medically important antimicrobials will move from over-the-counter to prescription within a 2-year period. Animal drug suppliers will begin to change the marketing status of certain antimicrobial drugs. All animal species are included in this change, from companion dogs and cats to backyard poultry, and from rabbits and show pigs to large livestock farms. The same restrictions will apply to all companion and farm animal species. These changes will take effect by June 11, 2023.

Effectively, this means that antibiotics that have been available at most farm supply stores will now require a prescription. Examples are injectable penicillin, oxytetracycline and sulfa products. Producers who plan to continue using products like these will need a veterinary-client-patient relationship or a VCPR. Simply put, this is a formal relationship between a producer and a veterinarian who serves as the primary contact for all the operation's veterinary services. The vet is familiar with you, your animals and your operation.

Businesses are allowed to continue selling products as labeled until the product is either sold out or expired. As new inventory arrives to restock shelves, the new marketing label will determine if the product is moved behind the counter.

There are efficient ways to reduce the need for antimicrobials. Every livestock operation is an integrated system; decisions made in one area of the farm will have an impact on other areas. Perhaps reviewing the consistency of the feeding program, vaccination program, considering the genetic selection of animals for improved health, or visiting new housing facilities designed for best animal comfort are ways of reducing antimicrobial use at the herd or flock level.

To learn more about reducing the need for antibiotics in livestock, call Wendie Powell, Livestock Production Agent, (620) 784-5337, wendiepowell@ksu.edu.

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