Talk with your vet now about VFDs

Stock Notes
BY **HAROLD HARPSTER**

THE veterinary feed directive is soon to arrive, courtesy of the U.S. Food and Drug and Administration. The days of picking up medicated feed additives at the local feed store and feeding it without veterinary oversight are largely over.

So now is the time to have a heart-to-heart chat with your veterinarian about it. Your business relationship with him or her is likely to change if you use medicated feed or water products.

By the end of this year, you'll be required to seek veterinary approval for many antimicrobial drugs once available over the counter.

FDA will eliminate all food animal growth promotion uses of "medically important" antimicrobials — ones used to treat human disease — by the end of 2016.

Key Points
- FDA's new rules for animal drug use will substantially change.
- Vet approval will be required even for former OTC products.
- VFD approval of use hinges on four "tests."

Remaining animal health uses meeting FDA's "judicious use" standards will require your veterinarian's approval.

All extra-label use of drugs will be banned. That means a veterinarian won't be able to use his judgment in approving a drug for a purpose not specifically listed on the label — except for injectable or water-delivered medication.

Much of the blame for antibiotic resistance in humans has been placed on feeding antibiotics to animals. We know this:

■ A relatively small percentage of the antibiotics used in livestock production are used for routine growth promotion. That practice is steadily being phased out.

■ A report in the New England Journal of Medicine found that U.S. doctors prescribe enough antibiotics to treat 80% of all Americans every year. In other words, antibiotics are clearly overused in humans.

■ A 2014 U.S. Centers for Disease Control report found that half of all prescriptions given to humans were unnecessary.

■ A recent FDA antibiotic use summary found the following usages in humans vs. animals (by volume of drug used):

penicillins — 44% vs. 6%
cephalosporins — 15% vs. 1%
sulfas — 14% vs. 3%
quinolones — 9% vs. less than 1%
macrolides — 5% vs. 4%
tetracyclines — 4% vs. 41%
ionophores (monensin, etc.) — 0% vs. 30% (Monensin isn't considered a medically important antibiotic.)

So it seems a bit unfair to put all the blame for antibiotic resistance in humans on livestock producers, doesn't it? Why do we hear very little about the overprescribing of antibiotics in human medicine?

Harpster is a beef producer and retired Penn State University animal scientist.

Back to that veterinarian chat

GRANTING you a veterinary feed directive is at your veterinarian's discretion, so don't assume it's an automatic process. It's up to him or her to decide if:

■ You have a genuine need.
■ The feed antibiotic will do the job you expect.
■ There are alternative products that aren't antibiotics.
■ You're able to meet pre-slaughter withdrawal times.

If you haven't done so already, make sure you establish a close working relationship with your veterinarian before VFDs are required at the end of this year.

Cattle drugs affected by VFD

HERE'S a read on how the directive will affect products used in cattle:

■ A veterinary feed directive won't be required to use monensin (Rumensin) in your rations if it's the only "antibiotic" in the ration. It's not considered a medically important antibiotic.

■ Many cattle feeders feed tylosin to control liver abscesses. You'll need a VFD to continue doing so, and for the monensin plus tylosin combination.

■ Milk replacers often contain neomycin and oxytetracycline. They'll require a VFD.

■ If you own a beef operation in different states, a VFD must be prepared by a veterinarian practicing in the state where the animals are receiving the drug.

■ Chlortetracycline and oxytetracycline are often added to the feed in "receiving rations" for feedlot calves to control bovine respiratory disease. They're listed as medically important drugs, so a VFD will be required.

■ Use of generic products varies with the product, and likely requires a VFD. Check with your veterinarian.

■ After Dec. 31, you'll still need a VFD for "leftover" products that previously didn't require a VFD.

■ Chlortetracycline isn't approved as a feed additive to control foot rot outbreaks, so it won't be allowed. It's approved for use for anaplasmosis though, and you can request a VFD.

Beef Briefs

New rule on ground beef
USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service has announced a new measure to better determine the source of foodborne illnesses linked to ground beef. Under the new final rule, FSIS is amending its recordkeeping regulations to require all official establishments and retail stores that grind raw beef products maintain more records specifying product sources.

WTO authorizes COOL tariffs
Though the World Trade Organization authorized $1.01 billion in tariffs as a result of complaints from Canada and Mexico over the U.S. country-of-origin labeling policy, the U.S. Congress later repealed COOL through a provision in December's omnibus spending bill. The repeal avoids the tariffs and an expected fallout due to the extra strain on U.S. trade relationships.

Video on beef sustainability
A new Meat MythCrusher video discusses the roughly 44% of animal carcasses that are rendered into products other than meat, including leather, animal feed and personal care products. Find the video online at *meatmythcrushers.com.*