

Vet on VFD: Good for everyone

BY JILL LOEHR

POP quiz for livestock farmers: What new rule goes into effect on Jan. 1?

If your answer was the veterinary feed directive, you are correct.

Buzz Iloff, veterinarian, Wyoming Vet

Clinic, says the gist is that all feed and water medications will require a form signed by a veterinarian once the VFD goes into effect. “We [veterinarians] need to know the animals, what’s going on and decide if they need to go on medicated feed and water-soluble medication,” he explains.

Iloff says producers who don’t have a veterinarian should establish that working relationship now.

Veterinarians will complete the VFD form, which livestock producers will keep on file for two years. The form includes the producer’s name and address, the veteri-



BETTER FOR ANIMALS: Buzz Iloff, veterinarian, Wyoming Vet Clinic, says consumers must understand that treating animals through feed and water puts less stress on them by avoiding vaccinations.

narian’s name and address, approximate number of animals treated, how much medicated feed or water they received, and for how long.

Iloff has a sense for why VFD is happening now. “I think a lot of it comes from the fact that people want to know where their food comes from,” he says. “There’s all this rhetoric about antibiotic resistance. But there’s never been any proven link between using antibiotics on food animals and creating resistant superbugs.”

Iloff notes the VFD will help keep it that way. “Anytime you use an antibiotic at a low level for a long time, you’re selecting for resistant bacteria, and we need to treat it at the right dosage,” he explains.

“Everyone says we’re using high levels of antibiotics in our animals,” Iloff says. “We aren’t. We’re using therapeutic dosages — the dosages the animals need to cure them of the bacteria and get them over it.”

The VFD will prevent using medicated feed and water-soluble medication for growth promotion, Iloff adds. “The products will be for treatment only, which is not a bad thing and really what we’ve done for the last several years. We don’t use low levels continuously at all. We use it at the right dosage for the right amount of time to get animals healthy.

As the VFD start date approaches, Iloff says most livestock farmers are already keeping accurate medication records. VFD forms from veterinarians will be valid for up to six months as long as the treatment program for the operation doesn’t change.

Iloff says feed companies are updating packaging labels to include “For treatment only” language and removing recommendations for growth promotion.

Iloff adds ionophores such as Bovatec and Rumensin, and coccidiostats such as Deccox will not be affected by the VFD. Ionophores and coccidiostats are not antibiotics; they go right into the digestive system and pass without absorbing into the animals’ systems.

“Overall, it’s [VFD] a good thing,” Iloff says. “We can prove to people that we’re not out here drilling antibiotics into our animals for no reason.”



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