Veterinary Feed Directive Paper

Among the numerous medical issues that humans face in our eternal battle against microorganisms, is the problem of anti-microbial resistance. An infinitesimal performance executed with stealth, this product of evolution is the result of anti-microbial drugs losing their effectiveness over a period of microbial generations. It is suggested that one of the contributing factors of this problem is the over-application and misuse of specific medications used in the livestock industry. One way that the US Food and Drug administration and the Center of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) is handling this tenacious problem is by creating what is called the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) rule.

The Veterinary Feed Directive rule is a strategy implemented to assuage the problem of anti-microbial resistance by controlling and regulating the amount of medicated feed that is being used by producers in the livestock industry. Starting from January 1st, 2017, medicated feed, or animal feed that also contains anti-microbial medication, also known as VDF feed or veterinary feed, can no longer be sold to producers over the counter. Anti-microbials vital to human health are also known as “medically important” anti-microbials, and for a producer to legally use it in animal feed, a veterinarian’s signature is now required. In addition, drug sponsors willingly removed any production claims on the label, which are labels that suggest the medicated feed will expedite growth or increase the efficiency of feed. Adding to that, medicated feeds now contain a warning stating that misuse of veterinary feed, such as using it to increase size of livestock, is breaking federal law. While there are many new rules being implemented in this strategy, the FDA outlines three key roles that are the backbone to the success of this plan: the veterinarian, the producer, and the distributor.

The veterinarian and producer need to first create what is called the Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship form or the VCPR form. Following the standards set by the VCPR form, the veterinarian will regularly meet with the producers and monitor the state of health of the producer’s animals. Veterinarians are highly trained to give proper diagnoses for animal illnesses, thus giving the veterinarian authority over the use of veterinary feed helps ensure judicious use of the veterinary feed. When the veterinarian makes a diagnosis that certain animals from the producer might need veterinary feed, a VFD order form must be written out on paper or electronically. Verbal agreements and suggestions are not enough to fulfill standards set out by the FDA. One reason is because there are many important things that must be written down on the VFD order, such as the type of medicated feed used and the veterinarians contact information. Another reason is because all three roles of this plan are now required to keep physical or electronic copies of the form for at least two years.

After the VFD form is complete, either the veterinarian or the producer must send a copy to the veterinary feed distributor where the distributor can then prepare to send the proper veterinary feed to the producer. There are three classes of veterinary feed. Type A is labeled as a “medical article” and is so concentrated that it is diluted to create Type B and Type C label feeds. Type B and Type C are what we call “Medicated VFD Feeds,” however type C is the only one that can be fed to livestock. After the distributor has approved the sale of the veterinary feed, the producer can either pick up or have the food delivered to them. Based on the VFD form, the producer must remember to use the feed in the proper way, including ending use of the feed by the written date. While these rules may sometimes seem strict and overbearing, it is highly important to remember that producers, veterinarians, and the government should all work together to combat this problem of anti-microbial resistance.

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