

UK Veterinarian Explains New Antibiotics Guidelines For Livestock Producers

LEXINGTON, KY. With proper use, antibiotic medications can keep animals healthy, control the spread of disease, help animals gain weight and also prevent diseases that could spread to humans. Recent concerns that the overuse or misuse of antibiotics could lead to an increase in antibiotic resistance have prompted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to implement a new strategy that will impact Kentucky livestock producers.

“The FDA’s new strategy aims to encourage the judicious use of antibiotics in food-producing animals,” said Michelle Arnold, extension veterinarian for the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. “Judicious use means using a drug appropriately and only when necessary.”

Arnold said that misuse and overuse of antimicrobial drugs allows resistant bacteria, the hard-to-kill “bad bugs,” to increase in numbers faster than susceptible bacteria, the easy-to-kill bugs, and can transfer through the food chain to humans.

“This increases the opportunity for people to become infected by resistant (bad bug) bacteria,” she said. “The FDA’s goal is to protect public health, slow the development of drug resistance and help reduce the number of infections in humans that are difficult to treat.”

The FDA has identified certain antibiotics that will require veterinary oversight. They are also going to help drug companies voluntarily change product labels to remove feed efficiency and growth promotion claims and rather emphasize disease prevention, control and treatment. They also provided information for companies on how to change their marketing materials to include veterinary oversight or supervision. Another area the FDA will focus on is simplifying the process to obtain a Veterinary Feed Directive drug – those intended for use in animal feed which are under the professional supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

The biggest change Kentucky livestock producers will face is having their veterinarian oversee their use of some antibiotics.

“Based on the available scientific evidence, the FDA believes the use of medically important antimicrobial drugs should involve the scientific

and clinical training of a licensed veterinarian,” Arnold said. “Veterinarians are uniquely qualified to determine which specific disease-causing organisms are likely to be present and to determine appropriately timed administration of medication relative to the disease.”

Medications included in the call for veterinary oversight are listed at [http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/GuidanceComplianceEnforcement/Guid-](http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/GuidanceComplianceEnforcement/GuidanceforIndustry/UCM052519.pdf)



PHOTO: Steve Patton, UK Ag Communications Specialist

[anceforIndustry/UCM052519.pdf](http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AnimalVeterinary/GuidanceComplianceEnforcement/GuidanceforIndustry/UCM052519.pdf). “Developing strategies for reducing antimicrobial resistance is critically important for protecting both public and animal health,” Arnold said. “Collaboration among the public, public health, animal health and animal agriculture communities is needed to assure that public health is protected while also assuring that such strategies are economically feasible to the producer and that the health needs of animals are addressed.”

Arnold emphasized importance of remembering the benefits of using antibiotics in food animal production and the adverse effects that would result from their removal.

“Although the convenience of buying feed-grade antimicrobials at a local farm supply will be changed by adoption of these guidelines, it is important that correct and medically sound advice accompany these purchases,” she said. “Unfortunately, not all employees of stores that sell health supplies (including online pharmacies) are adequately trained to give correct advice and may be unfamiliar with the potential harm if label directions are not carefully followed.” Δ