

IMPACT OF THE FEDERAL VETERINARY FEED DIRECTIVE

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The Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) final rule, which goes into effect on January 1, 2017, will impact producers and owners of food-producing animals and the veterinarians who care for them. This directive applies not only to large flocks and herds, but also to small groups (“backyard flocks”) of animals.

Some antibiotics previously available for purchase over-the-counter will require a VFD/prescription from a licensed veterinarian who has an established relationship with the animal owner/producer purchasing the medications. Use of some antibiotics will have new restrictions.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) implemented the final rule of the VFD to address concerns about antimicrobial resistance, judicious use of antimicrobials, and veterinary oversight of the use of “medically important” antimicrobials in feed and water for food-producing animals.

“Medically important” antibiotics are those antibiotics that are important for use in people. In addition to oversight by a licensed veterinarian, these “medically important” antimicrobials may no longer be used for growth promotion or feed efficiency.

VFD antimicrobials include, but are not limited to, oxytetracycline, chlortetracycline, tylosin, and penicillin. Medications such as ionophores are not restricted. A list of current antimicrobials transitioning from over-the-counter to VFD status is outlined on the FDA website: <http://www.fda.gov/animalveterinary/developmentapprovalprocess/ucm482107.htm>

For use of “medically important” antimicrobials in the feed and water for animals in Pennsylvania, the producer/owner must contact a Pennsylvania licensed veterinarian to obtain a feed directive/prescription, a written or electronic order for an antimicrobial for specified animals. Antimicrobial use in specific industries (e.g., poultry, swine, dairy) varies.

The animal owner must establish a veterinary-client-patient-relationship with a licensed veterinarian.

In Pennsylvania, the following statements are in the Veterinary Practice Act.

An established Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)

To write the VFD order, the licensed veterinarian must have an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with the producer. Based on the Pennsylvania Practice Act, a valid VCPR means:

- The veterinarian assumes responsibility for medical judgments regarding the health of the livestock, and the client (the owner or caretaker of the livestock), agrees to follow the veterinarian’s instructions.
- “Under the veterinarian’s care” means that the veterinarian or one of the veterinarian’s licensed associates has examined the animal or has made medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animals are kept.

At Penn Vet’s New Bolton Center, we have received numerous inquiries from animal owners about the VFD rule and its implementation. Many have voiced concerns about the availability of veterinarians and the ability to obtain necessary medications in a timely manner. In many situations, a quick response in administering treatment is essential to maintaining the health and welfare of the animals.

The veterinarians at New Bolton Center are preparing for this change by establishing veterinary-client-patient-relationships and collaborating with practitioners in both large and small animal practices to address antimicrobial needs. Many veterinary practitioners are willing to evaluate species that they had not worked with in the past. This will expand the availability of the critical numbers of veterinarians needed to fulfill the requirements of the VFD rule.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VFD AND ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE, PLEASE VISIT THE RESOURCE PAGE ON THE PENN VET WEBSITE: WWW.VET.UPENN.EDU/ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANCE.

The FDA and the American Veterinary Medical Association have outlined essential components of the VFD, addressing commonly asked questions on their websites:

- <http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/NewsEvents/CVMUpdates/ucm448620.htm>
- <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Pages/VFD123.aspx>

Preparations by animal owners and veterinarians prior to the January 1, 2017, deadline for implementation of the VFD rule will ensure a smooth transition.

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