

CHANGES TO ACCESS FOR OTC ANTIMICROBIALS

Due to concern about rapidly rising antibiotic resistance in Canada and around the world, Health Canada is making regulatory changes to increase veterinary oversight of medically important antibiotics used in livestock and poultry.

A medically important antibiotic is any antibiotic that is used to treat bacterial infections in humans. This includes pretty much any antibiotic that you can think of. Penicillin, for example, is a medically important antibiotic. The only ones that are not included are ionophores, which are drugs such as Rumensin and Bovatec that are used in livestock to increase feed efficiency or treat parasitic disease such as coccidiosis. Ionophores are not used to treat humans.

The first change, which has already been implemented (January 1, 2017), is that all label claims allowing medically important antibiotics to be used as growth promotants have been eliminated. These claims were voluntarily removed by the manufacturers; this means that use as growth promotants is no longer an acceptable use of these drugs in any circumstance.

Other changes that will be coming early in 2018 include:

- Increasing oversight on importation of veterinary drugs ("Own Use Importation" and import of active pharmaceutical ingredients, or raw drug products)
- Improving tracking of antibiotic drug sales by requiring mandatory reporting of sales volume from manufacturers
- Streamlining the approval process for low-risk veterinary health products that promote animal health and potentially reduce the need for antibiotics
- All medically important antibiotics will be moved to the prescription drug list.

This last change is likely to have the biggest impact on livestock producers. Currently, some livestock antibiotics, such as certain formulations of penicillin and tetracyclines, sulfa boluses for calf scours, or even medicated chick starter, can be bought off the shelf, or 'Over the Counter' (OTC) from places like farm supply stores.

Implicated MIAs for Switch from OTC to Prescription Status

Courtesy Health Canada

Apramycin	Sulphonamides
Bacitracin	Tetracycline/ Chlortetracycline/
Erythromycin	Oxytetracycline
Lincomycin	Tilmicosin
Neomycin	Tiamulin
Penicillin G	Tylosin/ Tylvalosin
Spectinomycin	Virginiamycin
Streptomycin/ Dihydrostreptomycin	Or their salts or derivatives

Once these changes come into effect, these items will no longer be sold at these stores, and producers will have to have a prescription from a veterinarian before they can buy them. And this applies to all animals-whether you have 500 head of cattle or five chickens. Even beekeepers will need a veterinary prescription before they can buy antibiotics for their bees. Provincial laws dictate that only veterinarians or pharmacists may sell prescription medications.

The proposed changes will also impact producers who purchase feeds containing antibiotics from commercial feed mills. Some antibiotics currently do not need a prescription before mixing in feed, but when the changes come into effect then prescriptions will be required whenever any antibiotic is mixed into feed. Also, some producers purchase antibiotics directly from the feed mill, to take home and mix in feed on-farm. Once the changes come into effect, the feed mill will be allowed to sell these medicated premixes only with a prescription. They will not be able to sell any antibiotic unless it is mixed in a feed. This includes all products with a Drug Identification Number (DIN). Talk with your feed mill manager and your veterinarian to determine how these changes are going to affect you.

It is important that all livestock and poultry producers be aware of the upcoming changes, and even more important that you understand how the changes will affect you specifically.

Before a veterinarian can prescribe any medication for your animals, by law, they are required to have an established Veterinary-Client-Patient relationship (or VCPR) with you. This relationship can differ depending on the species and circumstance, but typically if a vet has been out to your farm and is familiar with your animals and your management of them in the recent past, then a valid VCPR exists. If you see your vet only once a year when you stop in to buy vaccines, then a valid relationship does NOT exist. Do you currently have a veterinarian who routinely looks after your animals? Has this veterinarian been out to your farm in the last, say, six months to a year? If not, now is the time to build that relationship.

By law, a veterinarian cannot issue a prescription for any drug unless they have an established VCPR with a producer and a working knowledge of their animals. Once the changes come into effect, veterinarians will be obligated to follow the new rules or risk losing their license to practice.

The underlying reason for these changes is simple: antibiotic resistance is on the rise, and it is increasing faster than we can come up with new drugs to combat bacterial infections. Consequently, there is growing public pressure to reduce or eliminate the use of antibiotics in agriculture in order to preserve the efficacy of these drugs for human use. We see evidence of this pressure everyday as restaurants and grocery stores implement 'antibiotic-free' and 'raised without the use of antibiotics' policies.

Should agriculture lose access to antibiotics, it will result in welfare issues for animals and financial losses to producers. It is important that all producers practice good antibiotic stewardship so that agriculture continues to have access to these critically important medications.

by Wendy Wilkins, DVM, PhD, Disease Surveillance Veterinarian
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture/Livestock Branch

Reprinted with permission
First printed in **Beef Business Magazine** May 2017
www.skstockgrowers.com
