

***Veterinary Feed Directive – A Brief Rundown***  
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Many cattle producers, especially Advanced Master Beef Producer participants, have at least heard of the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD). If you haven't then here's a brief rundown: As of **January 1, 2017** all antimicrobials that are considered by the FDA to be important for human medicine will no longer be able to be used for growth promotion and feed efficiency, and will require a veterinary feed directive (VFD) for use as treatment, prevention or control of a disease.

Why is this happening? Some of the antimicrobials that we use to increase growth and feed efficiency are also used in human medicine, and are considered by the FDA to be medically important. The continued use of antimicrobials whether for humans, pets, or livestock could result in some degree of resistance. That being said, to take a proactive approach to preventing antimicrobial resistance in humans, the FDA is implementing a number of regulatory changes. One of which is the removal of growth promotion and feed efficiency claims from the labels of antimicrobials that are considered by the FDA to be medically important. Under the newly defined regulations, antimicrobials used in livestock production that are considered medically important will only be approved and labeled for use in the treatment, control or prevention of disease. Using them for growth promotion and/or feed efficiency will be **illegal**.

Medicated feeds can only be fed to animals for their intended use as specified on the medicated feed label. The same is true for antimicrobials that are applied to drinking water. To be clear, any use of a drug in a way other than what is specified on the label is considered "off-label" and can only be adjusted by a licensed veterinarian. Although not a new regulation, drugs that are administered to animals through medicated feeds (in contrast to some other methods of administration) can **never** be used off-label. This means that medicated feeds can only be fed for uses and at levels that have been previously approved by the FDA. These uses are always described on the label and it is **unlawful** for even a veterinarian to recommend or prescribe medicated feeds for off-label use. When used to treat, control or prevent disease these FDA deemed "medically important" antimicrobials will no longer be available OTC (over the counter). Their use will require a VFD, which can only be issued by a licensed veterinarian with whom the producer has a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR).

Medically important antimicrobials that **will** be affected by these changes include all drugs that are classified as cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones, glycopeptides, macrolides, penicillins, quinolones, sulfas and tetracyclines, as well as a few others that have yet to be specified. **Updates can be found on the FDA's website under the "Veterinary Feed Directive"**. Here are a few examples of products that will no longer be available for use for growth promotion and/or feed efficiency as of January 1, 2017 and some effects they may have on your operation:

- **Chlortetracycline (commonly referred to as CTC) (Aureomycin)** will no longer be labeled for use for increased rate of weight gain and improved feed efficiency. This means that free-choice mineral supplements medicated with CTC (commonly marketed for cattle grazing fescue) will no longer be available for this use. Any use of CTC in feed, regardless of form (free-choice feed, top-dressed, or in a total-mixed-ration), or in water, will require a VFD. For example, Aureomycin will no longer be available OTC, and its use for the control of bacterial pneumonia in incoming stocker cattle will require a VFD. CTC will continue to be available for use to control anaplasmosis and treat bacterial enteritis; however, this use will require a VFD.
- **Oxytetracycline (Terramycin)** will no longer be labeled for use for increased rate of weight gain and improved feed efficiency. This means that milk replacers medicated with oxytetracycline, alone or in combination with another drug (e.g. Neomycin), will no longer be available for this use. Any use of oxytetracycline in feed or water, regardless of form, will require a VFD.
- **Tylosin (Tylan)** will no longer be available OTC for use to reduce the incidence of liver abscesses. However it will be available for this use by obtaining a VFD. For example, feed lot rations

medicated with Tylan alone or in combination with another drug (even if the other drug is still available OTC (e.g., in combination with Rumensin), will require a VFD.

- **Virginiamycin (V-max)** will no longer be available OTC for use to reduce the incidence of liver abscesses. However it will be available for this use by obtaining a VFD. For example, feedlot rations medicated with V-Max alone or in combination with another drug (even if the other drug is still available OTC (e.g., in combination with Rumensin or Bovatec), will require a VFD.

Antimicrobials that are not considered medically important and that have been previously available OTC **will not** be transitioning to VFD status. Here are few examples of products that will continue to be available OTC for use for growth promotion and feed efficiency: **Bovatec (lasalocid), Cattlyst (laidlomycin propionate), Flavomycin/Gainpro (bambermycin), Rumensin (monensin)**

The following are some steps that can be taken **now** to aid in this transition:

- Establish and maintain a valid VCPR with your veterinarian. A VCPR in Tennessee requires that the veterinarian 1) has assumed the responsibility of making clinical judgments on your farm, 2) has examined your animals within the past 12 months, or made annual visits to the premises where the animals are kept, and 3) is readily available or has arranged for an emergency follow-up evaluation in the event of an adverse reaction to a treatment.
- **Consult with your county Extension agent and veterinarian** regularly about the VFD process in order to receive the most up-to-date information.
- **Contact your current feed retailer/distributor** to determine if they will continue to market OTC medicated feeds that will be transitioning to VFDs. Also confirm if they will continue to market specific VFDs that you have used in the past. This can serve as a good opportunity to ask if they intend to stock pre-manufactured VFDs for immediate distribution, or if the VFD medicated feed will only be manufactured upon receipt of a completed and signed VFD form. If your current retailer or distributor does not intend to market VFDs, consult with your veterinarian or county Extension agent to find one that does.
- **Work with your veterinarian** to develop and implement a biosecurity risk management program to reduce the risk of disease transmission to and from your farm. This will ultimately help to reduce the need for antimicrobials. Also develop and follow standard operating procedures (SOP) for adverse health events that may require the use of a VFD feed.
- **Establish and maintain an extensive record-keeping protocol**, and put it to use.

Although these upcoming federal regulatory changes may affect the way some antimicrobials are used in medicated feeds on your operation, they may also yield a number of benefits. Limiting the use of medically important antimicrobials to the treatment, prevention and control of disease will help to ensure the efficacy of these drugs for both human and animal health. This may also present the opportunity for the refinement of production practices in a way that negates their necessity of use for growth promotion and feed efficiency. Ultimately, this could and likely will lead to the development of new and novel non-antimicrobial technologies that enhance your ability to profitably, responsibly and sustainably produce beef.

The most up-to-date information on this topic can be found at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) under “Veterinary Feed Directive”. A list of OTCs (over the counter) transitioning to VFDs (Veterinary Feed Directive) can be found at: <http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm482107.htm>

Source: PB 1837 “Veterinary Feed Directives – What beef cattle producers need to know about the upcoming federal regulatory changes for medicated feeds” by UT Extension Specialist Jason Smith & UT Extension Veterinarian Lew Strickland.

**Info valid as of November 2015**