

Antibiotic use in food animals has become an increasingly important issue for consumers, producers, and veterinarians. There is growing concern that the overuse of these products may be linked to “rising numbers of life-threatening human infections from antibiotic-resistant bacteria known as superbugs”, as stated in The Guardian (see link below). As a result of this concern, we have begun to see stricter regulations set into place in order to prevent this issue from getting even more out of hand.

In October, the state governor of California signed restrictions into law that ban the regular use of antibiotics for prevention of disease. This bill will go into effect January 1, 2018. It will also restrict the over-the-counter sale of antibiotics for use in livestock. Although this is still a couple of years away, producers should be aware that California’s move is likely one that will soon be followed by other states. In fact, California’s law of antibiotic restriction is not the first of this type. Laws have already been passed that will restrict the use of antibiotics in feed. The Beef Cattle Institute (link below) states “As of December 2016, a veterinarian will have to authorize any antibiotic use in the feed except for ionophores (Rumensin, Bovatec, Catalyst), the bambermycins (Gainpro), bacitracin (BMD, Bacifer), and tiamulin (Denegard, used in swine). All other antibiotics used in the feed are classified as ‘medically important’ (based off of importance in human medicine) and will require a veterinary feed directive (VFD), which requires knowledge of the client’s operation. This means that a VFD will be required for any type of medicated feed containing a medically important antibiotic, including medicated milk replacer and even small quantities of feed for home-raised animals, such as show cattle.”

Other issues occur when producers misdiagnose and improperly treat their animals with products they have on hand without first consulting with a veterinarian. A veterinarian should always be consulted before treating your cattle so that you are sure they are treated appropriately and with the correct product and dosage. It is also important to clearly understand withdrawal times of the products you use so that no drug residue is detected in the meat when the cattle are taken to slaughter.

Because the use of antibiotics in food animals is becoming a controversial topic, producers should stay well informed on the laws being passed. Restrictions are being set in place to control the use of antibiotics, and it is important that producers continue to stay up to date on the laws regarding antibiotic use. As producers, we have a responsibility to use products appropriately, and guarantee that consumers are getting a safe product when they purchase beef. If you have any questions about the changes in allowance of antibiotic use in cattle, or withdrawal times for antibiotics please contact us.

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/oct/11/california-brings-in-strict-limits-on-use-of-antibiotics-in-livestock-farming>

<http://www.beefcattleinstitute.org/changes-antibiotics-regulations/>

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