

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Are You Ready for June 11?

June 18 is Father's Day, June 14 Flag Day, summer begins officially on June 21, but what is the deal with June 11? By now, most everyone is well aware of the changes coming in some over the counter antibiotic access, but maybe not everyone. If others are like me, you've been in a situation where foot rot, respiratory issues or other livestock health concerns pop up and you've grabbed a bottle of antibiotics off a shelf at a local retailer, given veterinarian and antibiotic label direction from the past. This convenience will no longer be an option starting this June, but it is with good reason. Let's take a look at why.

Beginning June 11, livestock owners will be required to obtain a prescription from a veterinarian to purchase certain medications, that to this point have been widely available over the counter. This process is very similar to the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) process that went into effect about ten years ago. This requirement is based on Guidance for Industry (GFI) #263 from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), calling for medically important antibiotics used in livestock, currently available over the counter (OTC) to transition to prescription-only.

Examples of human medically important antibiotics, that now fall under this guidance include: oxytetracyclines in several forms; injectable penicillin; intramammary tubes used to treat mastitis; sulfur drugs; and injectable tylosin. These medications will require a prescription from a licensed veterinarian for legal use and livestock producers will need an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) before purchasing prescription antibiotics.

While this is a substantial change, it is done with good intentions and will help to extend antibiotic use and effectiveness in humans and livestock alike. It is important to note that these products are not being removed from the marketplace. Rather, they are being transitioned from OTC to veterinary oversight, to help combat overuse/misuse. Affected medications will not be abruptly removed this summer, but the products may start to become hard to find as feed or farm supply stores do not to restock.

Please do not go out and stock up on these products. Having an excess amount of product will risk having product expire before it can be used. As discussed in the BQA guidelines, expired product is less effective and risks higher treatment failure. This is not only not responsible, it is financially unnecessary. Responsible antimicrobial use involves receiving veterinary input and only purchasing products when needed.

What can be done now is to first be aware of this change and secondly, make sure you have a good relationship with a herd health veterinarian to establish the VCPR required to purchase these products in the future. For anyone that has been through the work of securing a VFD, it is not a roadblock, but rather gives an opportunity to have good discussion with your vet and maybe even read the product label a little bit closer before use.

For more information on Guidance #263 and how to be prepared for its implementation in June, go to www.ncba.org under Producers, then Updated Antibiotic Guidelines, as there is a wealth of information and links to additional resources. Your local Extension agent and veterinarian are great resources for you as well.