

# Ask A Vet: VFD-Veterinary Feed Directive

*Sunday, September 18, 2016*

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

I have been hearing that there are changes in how producers can get their feed mixed with supplements like antibiotics for animal feed. Is it true that now we have to have a prescription for the feed much like a prescription for ourselves?

-Fed up

Dear Fed up,

To answer your question in a nutshell, YES but SORT OF. As of 2015, there has been a change in the governing of important medicines allowed in feedstuffs for food animals. There was a forum or meeting on antibiotic stewardship (responsible handling) at the White House in which the CEO of the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association), Dr. Ron DeHaven participated. It goes to show the level of commitment that we as "veterinarians have in the daily practice of veterinary medicine in treating livestock and the impact we have on both human and animal health". This is for the good of all because we are all concerned about antibiotic resistance and "super bugs" that would be harmful to us if we suddenly had no recourse to fight certain diseases because of those resistances.

The VFD or Veterinary Feed Directive final rule released in June of 2015 and approved in October of that year lays out the mandates on how "medically important" antibiotics used in livestock can be used and distributed to you the farmer or producer. It is through this VFD, that dictates that in order to use these antibiotics/medicines, one must go through veterinary approval. This also means that there has to be a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) in place. The AVMA considers this to be very critical as veterinarians have to comply to state laws related to the VCPR and therefore will need to do so in order to approve drugs in feeds via a prescription or order. As veterinarians, we have to walk a thin line as to when it is okay to write scripts for certain things. We sometimes get criticized by our clients for insisting that we see the patient recently (not 5 years ago) before dispensing medicines. What we are doing is complying with our veterinary oath and licensure to do this. We have to be accountable for every pill/tablet or milliliter of drug dispensed to the FDA and the DEA. This is why we take our job very seriously when we tell you that we have to see the patient or visit the farm within a reasonable amount of time before we sign off on a prescription.

The difference between a VFD and a prescription is how FDA defines it. They are technically two different categories. Both require regulation of medicines through the direct supervision by veterinarians. When the medicine is approved for in or on animal feeds this is a VFD drug. If it is a medicine NOT approved for in or on animal feed, this is a prescription drug. In a VFD, the owner/client is getting a written (nonverbal) statement by a veterinarian authorizing the use of a drug in or on feeds. This copy has to be obtained and given to the distributor of that feed (your feed mill is your distributor). They also call them a VFD order.

Although this may seem complicated, it really is not. It is just another way our great country goes about protecting our citizens by ensuring good wholesome product for consumption. We should be proud that regulations are tweaked and perfected to protect us all. God Bless America !!

-Dr. Wanda Schmeltz