



PRODUCTION PRACTICES

PRUDENT LIVESTOCK MEDICINE USE ON-FARM IMPORTANT FOR ANIMAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Safe and responsible use of livestock medicines is a cornerstone of on-farm food safety. It helps keep calves healthy, farmers and farm workers safe and perhaps most importantly, builds and maintains consumer confidence in Ontario-produced products.

Here are a few key things to keep in mind when it comes to good production practices for using medication on-farm safely and responsibly.

VET-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP AND EXTRA-LABEL DRUG USE

Working with a herd veterinarian can be a valuable asset to your farm. This doesn't mean a vet has to be on-farm every day, but a vet-client-patient relationship means having access to expert advice on management practices, health and production issues. It can also give you access to a wider range of medications to treat health issues since vets are able to issue prescriptions for extra-label treatment options.

Any livestock medication used in a manner not described on the label, regardless of whether it is purchased over the counter or from a vet, is considered extra-label and requires a prescription. Extra-label drug use is not permitted in Canada without veterinary supervision.

PROPER WITHDRAWAL TIMES

Make sure you adhere to the proper withdrawal times for all livestock medicines. This is key to ensuring food safety and that calves being sent to market are free of any medication residues. If feeding milk, do not use milk from cows being treated with medication since this may result in residues in the calf. If calves on dairy farms have received treated milk or received any kind of medical treatment, do not ship them until the meat withdrawal period has been met; you may not know their final



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destination after they leave your farm.

Unsupervised extra-label drug use is the most common cause of possible drug residue in food animals, so be sure to keep track of all prescriptions and medications used on-farm and review them periodically with your vet. This record-keeping is also important if you are working toward or have achieved certification under an on-farm food safety or quality assurance program.

PROPER INJECTION TECHNIQUES

Always inject in the calf's neck just in front of the shoulder or according to your vet's directions. It is recommended that you change your needle every 10 to 15 uses to maintain proper injection techniques. However, if the needle is



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bent, dull or contaminated with manure, you should immediately replace it with a new needle. Do not straighten or reuse a bent needle. You should clean needles and syringes with hot water between uses. If you use a disinfectant to clean your needles and syringes, rinse them thoroughly before using. However, it is recommended not to use a disinfectant for your needles or syringes if you are using a modified live vaccine.

PROPER STORAGE AND DISPOSAL

If you have empty livestock medicine containers, animal health products that have expired or you will no longer need, or used sharps, such as medical needles, syringes or medical blades, it is critical that you store and-or dispose of them properly. Animals should not be treated with expired medications since product stability and potency may be compromised. Proper disposal of unused animal health products and used sharps is also important to help prevent the potential for water contamination, and ensure worker health and safety.

While on-farm, unwanted medicines and sharps should be securely stored and clearly labelled so they do not pose a risk to farm workers or are used inadvertently. These products should never be stored on-farm long-term, buried or thrown into manure piles, hay or straw, thrown out with household garbage or recycling, or burned.

There are various options available for proper disposal, although this varies regionally across the province. Some municipal landfills will accept unwanted medicines and sharps, as will some vets. For larger farms, a commercial disposal service may be an option. For more information, visit: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca> 