Livestock antibiotic label changes eliminate over-the-counter availability

On June 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2015 the Food and Drug Administration released the final rule of the Veterinary Feed Directive. The FDA states that this rule is part of an overall strategy by the agency to ensure judicious use of feed grade and water soluble antibiotics in food producing animals.

“The issue surrounding the use of these antibiotics began several years ago.”, says Craig Payne, director of veterinary Extension and continuing education at the University of Missouri.

According to Payne the FDA established two primary goals. One was to phase out the use of feed grade and water soluble antibiotics for production purposes such as improved feed efficiency. The other was to move these antibiotics from over-the-counter availability to veterinary supervision.

“The FDA then provided the animal health companies with guidance on how to make labeling changes to accomplish these goals,” says Payne “and all companies agreed to make the necessary changes by December 2016.

Payne says the biggest difference for producers will be the move from over the counter availability to veterinary supervision. This means producers will need to have a prescription from their veterinarian before they can obtain these antibiotics in the future.

Payne points out that technically, the prescription for a feed grade antibiotic is called a Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) and for water soluble antibiotics it’s called a prescription. In either case, he emphasizes that a Veterinary Client Patient Relationship (VCPR) must be in place before the veterinarian can legally issue a VFD or prescription. In other words, the producer and veterinarian need to have a working relationship and the veterinarian must be familiar with the animals on the operation.

Even though the changes won’t be made until December 2016, Payne encourages producers to begin discussing these changes with their veterinarian. Payne also mentions that Extension, FDA and other groups will be providing information about these changes as well.

“Just keep your eyes and ears open for any opportunity to get additional education on this issue,” Payne says.

To view the FDA fact sheet regarding the final rule, visit http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/ucm449019.htm