

Using Animal Health Products Safely & Effectively

We all hope we can minimize the use of animal health products for many reasons – but sometimes situations or normal health prevention practices require we use them. Everyone’s goal in any animal health program is obviously to minimize the risk of drug residues, and broken needles but sometimes though natural human error or simply our very busy lives mistakes happen. Below are some simple tips and techniques to help improve the effectiveness of animal health products and avoid potential problems in the future.

- **Clear cattle I.D.** - Having cattle clearly identified makes linking the animal with its treatment much easier. Cattle can be individually identified or by group or pen – either works well. If group treatments occur, writing down the pen number even if animals are not individually identified, is a good control method provided all the cattle are held in that group until the product with the longest withdrawal time has past. If cattle are removed from the treatment group though, remember to identify them and track where they go to ensure they don’t get “lost” in the herd and the withdrawal time forgotten.
- **Storing animal health products** – How products are stored may impact withdrawal times and result in residues, or even reduce product effectiveness in fighting disease. To avoid this:
 - Store according to label directions, for example, storing products that require cool temperatures in a fridge (where your beverages are truly cold), a cooler or with a cooler pack, if out in the field, are some good options.
 - Organizing storage areas helps reduce the chances of anyone accidentally grabbing the wrong medications, and ensures labels stay clearly readable. If a busy (and messy) day at the chute results in a label not being as readable, have a copy of the product label insert handy where people can find them.
 - If non-cattle medications are kept on hand, store on a separate shelf, or in a labelled box or shelf, so potential mix-ups don’t occur.
 - Discard any products that have expired or have been accidentally frozen or exposed to excess heat so any changes in product don’t affect withdrawal time or effectiveness.
- **Using animal health products** – To ensure they work to the best of their ability and meet Canadian animal and human health standards:
 - Use products that are:
 - Approved for use in beef cattle – e.g. look for the wording “for livestock”, “veterinary use”, “for food-producing animals” or beef cattle.
 - Registered in Canada e.g. have a DIN (Drug Identification Number) number on the packaging.
 - Use according to label directions, or in the case of extra-label or prescription drug use, according to a written veterinary prescription to ensure the withdrawal times used successfully avoids a potential residue.
 - Ensure everyone working on your beef cattle operation – especially those that treat or ship cattle - understand how products are used and how you record information so critical information isn’t lost.
 - Record all treatments on a permanent record so when it comes time to ship (whether it be for emergency or normal shipping events) the person who ships knows where to look. Key information to record: date(s) treated, animal /pen/group identification, product used, dosage, route of administration (eg. Sub-Q or IM), withdrawal time, and initials of person treating.
 - Securely restrain cattle to avoid potential bent or broken needles and use only sharp needles (not dull or burred). Avoid straightening needles for re-use as they are weakened and more likely to break. Wherever possible use Highly Detectable Needles that are better detected at the processing plant should an accidental shipping without proper notification occur.
 - Take particular care with culled cattle or any unexpected emergency shipping of cattle that may have been treated – e.g. cattle group treated with parasiticides, cows that when preg checked and found open, cows with calving problems or unexpected injuries – checking records at any time, but especially these groups if they’ve failed to respond to treatments, will help avoid unwanted residues. Even if not intended for slaughter, remember the next buyer may also have an unexpected need for emergency slaughter and unknowingly face a residue incident if the information is not passed onto them.
 - Find out if new cattle were given any animal health products and if they’ve met their withdrawal times so if emergency slaughter or sale of the cattle does suddenly occur it’s good to know -- this is particularly important when products with long withdrawal times (eg. 60 days) are used.

If you found this information useful and want to know more, contact Annette Moore, BC-VBP Program Coordinator toll free 1-866-398-2848 ext 2 or Email: vbp@cattlemen.bc.ca) for more information.