Management

Know Your Veterinarian – Officially

By Josh White, Executive Director, Producer Education

By now I’m certain you have heard that changing FDA regulations (VFD, Guidance 209 and 213) will change the way we use antibiotics in the near future. But what does that mean for your farm, ranch or feedyard, and what do you need to do about it? The short answer is to get to know your veterinarian, and make it official. All of the changing regulations move the veterinarian to a position of greater responsibility in the stewardship of antibiotics in livestock. If you don’t already have one, developing a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with a veterinarian who has expertise with cattle and invests regularly in continuing education with a cattle focus should be on your “to do” list.

Many states (29 currently) have a statutory definition of the VCPR which meets FDA requirements and controls. Check with your state animal health officer’s office or FDA requirements and controls. Check with your state has no FDA-recognized VCPR, the website for additional information. If your state animal health officer’s office or FDA requirements and controls. Check with your state has no FDA-recognized VCPR, the website for additional information.

Further guidance on an effective VCPR is provided to veterinarians by the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP). AABP is an association of veterinarians whose mission is to serve society as leaders in cattle health, welfare and productivity. The AABP website, aabp.org, provides guidance to veterinarians and their clients on establishing and maintaining a valid VCPR. Below is a summary:

1. Establish a written agreement with your veterinarian which identifies the farm veterinarian who is accountable for drug use and treatments administered to the cattle on the farm operation. If more than one veterinarian or veterinary practice has a working relationship on the farm operation, then the agreement should establish which one has the overall responsibility for treatment protocols, training of personnel, review of treatment records, monitoring drug inventories, and assuring appropriate labeling of drugs. This oversight includes all drugs used on the farm regardless of how they are obtained. Regular farm visits are essential to a VCPR and frequency should be determined by the Veterinarian of Record based on type and size of the operation.

2. If a veterinarian who is not the Veterinarian of Record provides professional services in any type of consultative or advisory capacity, then it is incumbent on that veterinarian to ensure that the Veterinarian of Record is contacted and informed of their findings and recommendations.

3. Provision of drugs or drug prescriptions should be for specific time frames appropriate to the scope and type of operation involved and only for the management groups within the operation that the Veterinarian of Record has direct involvement and oversight. Establishment of a VCPR for the sole purpose of the sale of drugs or increased sales of a particular brand of drug product is not a valid or ethical reason for having a VCPR.

Following these suggestions will position you for success in keeping your animals healthy and your outfit in compliance with changing regulations.