Volume 45 | Issue 2 Article 9

1983

AVMA Sponsors Meeting on FDA's Revised Drug-Use Policy

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AVMA Sponsors Meeting on FDA's Revised Drug-Use Policy

A recently announced change in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) policy on the use of drugs in food-producing animals resulted in a conference called by the AVMA at its Schaumburg, Illinois, headquarters on September 27, 1983.

The meeting was organized in response to an outcry of concern from veterinarians and producers that a new policy announced by the FDA's Bureau of Veterinary Medicine last July would impose excessive restrictions on extra-label use of food-animal drugs. Under the FDA's revised policy, a finding of illegal drug residues will no longer be the only reason for initiating punitive action. The revised policy states that use of a drug in food animals for a purpose or in a dosage not specified on the product's label directions will also be justification for punitive action.

The changes recommended at the September conference would assure that the FDA will *not* interfere when, in the veterinarian's professional judgment, there is a need to treat a food animal with a drug or a dosage not specifically approved by the FDA for an existing disease condition.

It is expected that the recommended changes will be reviewed for possible endorsement by the AVMA and other national groups, and hopefully acted upon by FDA authorities.

If the FDA fails to amend its revised policy, it is possible that veterinarians will be practicing under a regulatory cloud of impropriety when they decide to use a drug for purposes not exactly stated on the label.

However, if the recommended changes *are* adopted, FDA authorities would continue to take action against veterinarians in cases where drugs are illegally used and/or distributed for purposes not stated on the product label, and in the absence of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship. FDA authorities would respect the veterinarian's professional prerogatives when a veterinarian-client-patient relationship has been established so that the veterinarian is familiar with the owner, the animal, the premises, and knows the management conditions. FDA authorities, however, will still hold the veterinarian and the client responsible for any drug residues in food products that may occur following treatment regimens that do not follow label directions.