ON-FARM FEED MEDICATION USE – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Approximately 20 medications are approved for in-feed use in Canada and they are typically used for growth promotion or therapeutically for disease treatment. At the current time the in-feed medication regulatory environment in Canada is not very well harmonized. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is the federal department with the mandate to ensure that livestock feeds manufactured and sold in Canada are safe, effective and labelled correctly. The Canadian Pork Council has their quality assurance program, commonly referred to as CQA, while the commercial feed industry has a feed safety program, known as FeedAssure. Both of the latter programs are voluntary, HACCP based and were introduced to their respective sectors in the late 1990s.

MEDICATION USE ON-FARM

Medications make their way to the farm, and ultimately the feed trough, by a variety of means. Approximately half of the pigs in Ontario are fed complete feeds that have been prepared in commercial feed mills. The vast majority of this feed is being manufactured in mills that have been accredited under the FeedAssure program. For pork producers using medicated feeds from these sources the task of maintaining records is fairly straight forward. The onus is on the feed supplier to provide the necessary documentation with respect to medication rate, directions for use, withdrawal times, etc. However, one of the challenges faced by the producer is when the class of feed and/or type of medication needs to be changed in a given feed bin. Producers should be aware that proper sequencing and/or perhaps emptying of bins may be necessary to abide by regulations governing the carryover of medications between different classes of swine.

For pork producers purchasing supplements or premixes, maintaining accurate records becomes a little more challenging. In many cases, more than one type of medication is being used and/or there are several classes of swine being fed medicated feeds. There is the need to convert medication concentrations in the premixes to levels in complete feeds and often the same medicated premix is being used to manufacture a series of feeds. If concentrated medications of various strengths, and potentially multiple feeding rates, are being used on-farm the situation becomes increasingly complex. Detailed mixing instructions, sequencing or flushing protocols and mixing records are required.

PROPOSED REGULATIONS

The proposed Regulations Regarding the Manufacture of Medicated Feeds (RRMMF) is a federal document meant to govern the manufacture of medicated feed in both commercial feed mills and on-farm. The last version of this document included provisions for mixer performance testing, scale and metering device verification, and equipment cleanout procedure verification. Dropped was the requirement for daily reconciliation of medication inventory.

Appropriate cleanout, flushing and/or sequencing procedures are required for all feed manufacturers that use the same mixing equipment for medicated feeds containing different medications and/or medicated and non-medicated feeds. This is perhaps the single most significant requirement where there is disagreement among the various quality assurance programs. Sequencing of feeds is the method preferred by the feed industry to deal with medication residues.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past decade the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and various stakeholder groups have engaged in a series of failed attempts to harmonize the regulation of medications in livestock feeds. In the absence of a collaborative framework, the feed industry through its FeedAssure program, producer groups through on-farm CQA programs and CFIA through its feed inspection system have worked in isolation to ensure the safe use of medications.

A new round of consultations among the various stakeholder groups is underway. It is anticipated that an updated set of regulations will be introduced later this year. These new regulations must be aimed at protecting human and animal health, but must not introduce unnecessary costs to feed purchasers.