

PM+: Harmonisation crucial to EU animal health review

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Opinion Plus

Medicated feed is an efficient and practical method of maintaining animal health, explains IFAH-Europe's Roxane Feller.



Like people, animals get sick and need to be treated. Good hygiene practices and the responsible use of veterinary medicines are essential to maintaining animal health and welfare.

This in turn benefits human health by controlling animal diseases that could spread to people and also by allowing a healthy and affordable food supply in the case of food-producing animals.

Medicated feed is basically an administration route, a way of delivering medicines to animals. The medicine is given to the animal via its feed on the basis of a veterinary prescription.

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It is suitable for both pets and food-producing animals. All administration routes are valuable, but sometimes medicated feed can be the best, if not the only, option.

For example administering a product onto a pet's skin is a relatively straightforward process. However, administering a tablet to an angry cat is another matter altogether, especially when the cat in question suffers from a chronic disease and needs its medication on a daily basis.

Similarly, on a farm, treating diseases in animals doesn't always work on an individual basis and is often, practically-speaking, impossible. Think of a poultry farmer having to administer medicine to deworm 2000 chickens.

Veterinary medicines are incorporated in feeds within licensed manufacturing facilities. They can only be delivered after a veterinarian has written a prescription indicating the correct dosage.

Only veterinary medicines specifically approved for this administration route can be used. After a vet prescribes the medicine it is added to the feed and becomes 'medicated feed' and is strictly regulated under the 'medicated feed legislation'.

This legislation ensures that the addition of the medicine is done in a controlled and safe way by licensed manufacturers who are subject to government inspection.

The manufacturer must have the required personnel and equipment to be able to incorporate the medicine into the feed in a homogeneous manner and according to the conditions for use of the medicine. Record-keeping is also a key requirement under the legislation.

So why is all this so important? Well, medicated feed is a very efficient way of overcoming many practical problems of administering medicines to both farm animals and pets. It avoids the stress of handling the animal and reduces risks to the person giving the medication.

Sometimes, within a farm-setting, disease outbreaks can affect all animals in a group and this group then needs to be treated. In some cases the animals show symptoms and are clearly ill, others are infected but don't yet show symptoms, while others again may not yet be infected but soon will be.

This is an instance where medicated feed can be prescribed by the vet to benefit the group of animals and prevent the disease from spreading further.

The use of medicated feed is monitored, transparent and only available on prescription. It is as highly regulated as all other veterinary medicines and is an important administration route in ensuring sick animals get the proper care and treatment they need.

We at IFAH-Europe aim to ensure that the European commission's proposals revising the EU's veterinary medicines and medicated feed legislation are harmonised across all member states and that this treatment option remains available to all veterinarians, farmers and pet owners.

About the author

Roxane Feller is Managing Director of IFAH-Europe, the representative body of manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe.

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