Drug Residue Trends in New York Dairies

For the past several years the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been promoting judicious drug use on farms. The concerns of antibiotic resistance and the continued levels of drug residue violations in meat and milk have led to the FDA’s new Veterinary Feed Directive and its five-year transition plan to move away from over-the-counter antibiotics; clarify drug labels and increase monitoring of drug use in food animals. The following is information on meat drug residue violations in New York since 2015 and trends that are occurring as well as an educational program offered by NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to help with drug use and management with the objective of improving drug stewardship and reduce meat and milk drug residue violations.

In New York State the number of drug residue violations detected in meat have remained steady at around 50 per year from 2015 to 2018. Nationally, New York is ranked fourth and is responsible for 7-8% of residues found in livestock in the country.

In 2018 100% of meat residue violations in New York origin cattle came from the dairy industry. Approximately 12% were from bull calves (bob veal) and 88% were from adult cull dairy cows. So, what can be done to ensure our farms are implementing the proper procedures regarding judicious drug use in animal agriculture and to lower drug residues in meat in New York?"

An alarming trend is the rise of Ceftiofur drugs – Naxcel/Ceftiflex, Excenel and Excede - in drug residues detected at slaughter. In 2015 Ceftiofur made up 27% of meat drug residue violations. Fast forward to 2018 and Ceftiofur make up 46% of meat drug residue violations. FDA is searching for answers as to why this is happening. Farms should read and follow label and insert directions for these drugs and talk with their veterinarians to assure they are using them appropriately. The Department is also seeing some milk processors testing for these drugs in bulk milk. Farms should be aware of possible rejection of their milk if they have a positive test at any of these processors.

Besides Ceftiofur, penicillin remains a concern, contributing to 29% of the drug residue violations in 2018. Neomycin has dramatically been reduced in meat residue violations likely a result of the new Veterinary Feed Directive, VFD, that went into effect in 2017.
To address these concerns, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets created the NYS Food Safety and Drug Residue Avoidance Education Program. The program helps farms evaluate their drug use in animals and their recordkeeping management. The program features a voluntary, educational, and confidential on-farm “Best Practice” visit with a New York State veterinarian. The goals of this free consultation are better drug use, improved management of medications and reduced drug residues in milk and meat that enter the food supply.

The visit includes

- a review of drug regulations for food animals
- a risk assessment of the farm’s current practices,
- a list of priority areas for improvement and
- practical strategies/safeguards to improve management and the farm’s recordkeeping system.

The Department strongly recommends that the farm’s herd veterinarian participate in this on-farm visit to strengthen the Veterinarian – Client – Patient Relationship (VCPR) and to encourage the herd veterinarian and farm to continue to work together on the farm’s drug use, training, culling decisions and recordkeeping. The herd veterinarian’s participation not only allows farms legal access to prescription and Veterinary Feed Directive drugs, but also helps identify the correct drug choices for farm-specific issues, create proper drug use protocols and withdrawal specifications, and identify areas of opportunity to reduce drug use through preventative measures. **This program compensates the herd veterinarian for their participation so there is no cost to the farm.** Participating herd veterinarians will receive a voucher for their time, – maximum of $275 for the initial farm visit and a maximum of $125 for a follow-up farm visit.

**NYSCHAP enrollment is not required; however, farms enrolling in NYSCHAP can benefit in areas beyond drug use in animals, such as disease management, milk/meat quality, foot health, animal care, biosecurity and more.**

To sign up for a Best Practice visit, contact the NYSCHAP program coordinator, the NYS field veterinarian in your area, or your herd veterinarian. An on-farm visit will be scheduled at your convenience. For additional information, please contact the NYSCHAP Coordinator, Melanie Hemenway, DVM at (585) 313-7541 or email: melanie.hemenway@agriculture.ny.gov.