

Farm news



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Important Information for Farmers Regarding the use of Fluke and Worming Products in Dairy Cows

We've been asked to circulate the following document and to ensure all our farmers are aware of it. The take home messages are these:

1. Always use medicines in accordance with the data sheet recommendations (and always check, and keep up to date with, the data sheets).
2. Keep accurate medicine records as required by law.
3. Ensure that all milk and meat withholding periods are observed before any produce is sold for human consumption.

In 2013 The European Commission, working with the European Medicines Agency, changed the Summaries of Product Characteristics (SPCs), Marketing Authorisations (MAs) and labels of many medicines containing flukicides across the European Union. Since that time many anthelmintics have also had their SPCs and MAs reviewed.

InfiniPlex for milk (IPM) testing (Randox Laboratories) is now **widely available** to dairy processors, cheese manufacturers and retailers. This testing system will **reliably pick up minute traces of fluke treatments, worming products and other substances which should not be present in milk**. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), Defra and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) have **markedly increased their surveillance throughout the dairy industry** and have encouraged processors and retailers to do the same. The role of these agencies is to **maintain food safety and confidence in milk as a foodstuff**, which is essential to the dairy industry; they will have a **zero tolerance** to any unauthorised substances found in milk. If a flukicide is used in a dairy cow outside the data sheet recommendations then any food product containing that substance would not be able to legally enter the food chain. There is no residue tolerance; its presence alone at any concentration is breaking the law. If an unauthorised substance is found in milk collected from a dairy farm then there could be serious consequences for a farmer's contract with their processor. Please note that this also applies to other medicines which may have been dispensed to the farm and which are unauthorised to use in milking cows e.g. florfenicol, which may be dispensed to treat pneumonia in young calves. Cases have already occurred where milk has failed an IPM test for the presence of these substances.

Up until now a more educational approach has been taken, however these tolerant attitudes are rapidly changing with the advent of the IPM test and an increasingly sensitive public concerning residues in food. In the event of a food safety concern the FSA and Trading Standards could become involved and this could open up the possibility of a farmer being prosecuted. Please also bear in mind that in the event of a human food safety concern the authorities have the ability to prevent animals contributing to the food chain for considerable periods of time e.g. a full lactation or even a lifetime ban. If the farm medicines records were not sufficiently precise then it is possible that the whole of the farmer's stock could be labelled in this way.

Whilst this notice is primarily directed towards milk production the same protocols apply for meat products, so ensure your withholding periods are correctly observed and double check the data sheet for any changes since you last used the product.

Please be aware that your milk is likely to be regularly screened for these products, if you are in any doubt regarding which products you can use and in which circumstances please check with your farm vet before using them. In any event please take the time to have this conversation with your veterinary surgeon at the next convenient farm visit and review your current practices regarding fluke and worm treatments in both your milking herd and young stock.

Another area of concern regards a test failure for these substances post calving. With the dramatic reduction in the use of dry cow antibiotics, farmers may be tempted to put a cow's milk into the tank earlier than they previously did. Please remember that there are milk withholding periods following calving with these medicines for example Triclabendazole, even if the product is used at the recommended time prior to calving. Also in the event of a premature calving, these withdrawal periods must be adhered to. Please also be aware that pour-on products can be licked off by other cattle, i.e. do not mix treated and untreated cattle until the product has been safely absorbed.

Please ensure your Medicines records are clearly and accurately kept as per the legal requirements and that they are constantly updated. Records should be updated daily and the use of an electronic recording system produces a time and date stamp which is useful when defending a case.

If you have any questions regarding the use of Fluke and Worming Products, please call us on 01332 294929

For more information call our practice on **01332 294929** or email farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com

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