

# CHANGES ARE COMING FOR HOW YOU PURCHASE VETERINARY DRUGS FOR YOUR LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY

**Effective December 1, 2018 you will need a veterinary prescription to use medically important antimicrobials**

## What are medically important antimicrobials?

Many of the chemical classes of antimicrobial drugs, or antibiotics, used in animals are also used in humans. Some of these antimicrobials are essential for treatment of serious life-threatening infections in humans. If these drugs become ineffective due to the development of bacterial resistance, alternative antimicrobials may not be available to treat infections caused by resistant bacteria. Drugs with limited or no alternatives for treatment of infections, or where alternatives available are within the same class, are be considered more important than others (Table 1).

## What does this mean for me?

Effective December 1, 2018 you will need to have a veterinary prescription to use Category I, II and III antimicrobials (Table 1) as a part of the care for your animals. Only licensed veterinarians and feed mills will be able to sell these medications. You will not be able to get these drugs from a livestock medicines outlet, co-operative, or other places

where over the counter animal medications are sold. As well, from November 17, 2017 on you will no longer be able to import these antimicrobials. A full list of these drugs is included in Table 2.

## It is important to work with your veterinarian

Having a veterinary-client-patient-relationship is critical before a veterinarian prescribes any medication, including an antimicrobial. This means you regularly work with a veterinarian who knows your animals and your production practices. This working relationship is documented and relied upon for the health of your herd or flock. This allows the veterinarian to make a diagnosis in the event of a health problem on your farm, which may in turn result in the prescription of an antimicrobial if needed.



**Table 1: Criteria for antimicrobial drug categorization**

| Category                 | Preferred choice for serious human infections | No or limited alternatives available |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| I – Very High Importance | Yes   | Yes                                  |
| II – High Importance     | Yes   | No                                   |
| III – Medium Importance  | No  | No/Yes                               |
| IV – Low Importance      | Not applicable                                | Not applicable                       |

Source: *Veterinary Drugs Directorate, Health Canada*

## What else should I know?

As of December 1, 2018 the manufacturers and distributors of veterinary drugs will no longer include growth promotion claims on their antimicrobial products.

Going one step further, animal medications that contain medically important antimicrobials will include a new logo on the label to help make them more easily recognised.

These steps are being taken in recognition of the importance of responsible antimicrobial use to help ensure these tools remain effective.