



Making things clear

VCNZ's Seton Butler clarifies professional guidance on cattle inductions and antibiotic use.

One of the roles of VCNZ's Professional Standards Committee (PSC) is to make recommendations to VCNZ for developing statements or policies on issues relating to professional standards. As a result, VCNZ has released PSC-developed professional guidance on inductions in cattle, the prescribing of critically important antibiotics (CIAs), and dry cow antibiotic therapy (DCAT). I summarise this guidance below.

Statement on cattle inductions

This statement clarifies the commonly understood position that:

- the non-therapeutic induction of parturition in (dairy and beef) cattle is prohibited. It's not acceptable to induce otherwise healthy cows for economic and/or herd-management purposes (eg, to manipulate calving patterns)
- veterinarians must only induce parturition in cattle in therapeutic situations (ie, where an individual cow is diagnosed with a condition that necessitates the premature delivery of their calf, in order to protect the welfare of the cow and/or the calf).

Technical advice on critically important antibiotics

This guidance addresses a potential ambiguity in the intentions of 'good stewardship' and 'authorisation for future use' in relation to antimicrobial resistance.

- VCNZ understands the expectations outlined in Section 6 of the *Code of Professional Conduct* to mean that there are few situations where it would be considered permissible for CIAs to be left on farm for future use, assuming that points 12–15 [see the full guidance] have been met.
- In all circumstances where veterinarians authorise CIAs, they are responsible for their subsequent use and must:
 - > substantiate and record their decision-making processes to establish that the CIAs' use is justified
 - > keep appropriate records of the diagnostics and CIAs administered
 - > conduct and record regular audits and reconciliations of the CIAs authorised within the term of the supply period.

The essence here is that this is a clear signal to veterinarians that they should think twice before leaving CIAs on farm for farm staff to decide when and how to use them.

Statement on authorisation of dry cow antibiotic therapy

This statement is extensive, so I've pulled out a few key points. Veterinarians' responsibilities when authorising DCAT include:

- Authorising at a herd level is similar to that for an individual animal: the veterinarian must have enough contact with the herd/animal to be able to justify the authorisation. The authorising veterinarian must have visited the herd at least once in the previous six months.
- Veterinarians must identify cows with evidence of infection and only authorise DCAT for use in cows that are likely to be infected (ie, selective DCAT treatment).
- Veterinarians must justify each animal's treatment plan by ensuring there is sufficient clinical evidence to support a need for DCAT use for each animal, eg, full herd test results, or alternatives such as hand-held rapid mastitis tests.
- Veterinarians should only authorise whole-herd DCAT to manage animal welfare in herds with indicators of a particularly high prevalence and/or a justifiable risk of infection.
- When authorising whole-herd DCAT, veterinarians must ensure the implementation of a comprehensive udder health improvement plan.
- Veterinarians must ensure that people administering restricted veterinary medicines are competent, including competency in providing advice on adequate teat disinfection, administration techniques and milk and meat withholding periods.

I believe this guidance brings the veterinary profession's expectations into line with those of society, the market, the government and regulators – that antibiotics are only to be used to treat existing infections and that whole-herd DCAT should become increasingly uncommon.

I acknowledge that this summary doesn't contain all the detail you'll require, and encourage you to refer to the website for more information: www.vetcouncil.org.nz/web/resources/guidelines_and_standards/web/publications/type/guidelines_and_standards.aspx.

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The PSC has 11 members and has recently expanded to include presidents and representatives of four NZVA special interest branches – Companion Animal Veterinarians, Society of Dairy Cattle Veterinarians, Society of Sheep and Beef Cattle Veterinarians, and New Zealand Equine Veterinary Association.