

Drug Screening Programs at Youth Livestock Shows

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Drug screening programs are commonplace at youth livestock exhibitions across the country. Their basic goal is to ensure a safe and wholesome food supply, while educating youth about the importance of keeping the products of animal agriculture free from drug residues. The two most critical items to understand about livestock drug screening programs are 1) withdrawal times for medications given to animals and 2) the approved-use status of each medication specifically for the given animal species.

A withdrawal time is the period between when a specific medicine is given and when it is acceptable to market the animal. This information is located on the label of the medicine or medicated feed. Once the withdrawal time has passed, the animal is generally considered safe to enter the food chain. Youth should work closely with a veterinarian to ensure that withdrawal times are followed as there are several factors that can affect the actual withdrawal time. The following are reasons why the established labeled withdrawal time may need to be extended (consultation with a veterinarian is necessary):

- Giving a higher dose than indicated on the label.
- Administering in a manner or location not directed by the label (for example, giving the medicine subcutaneously instead of intramuscularly).
- Giving repeated doses over time.

A non-approved substance is any substance given to a species for which it is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This includes drugs not approved for a given species, such as products used in human medicine that are not approved for animals. It is important to note that, aside from feed additives, certain drugs can be given to unapproved species on the order of a veterinarian. If so directed, the veterinarian will also provide the withdrawal time for the medication.

Below are important items to consider when preparing livestock for exhibition.

1. Know what you are feeding your animals.
 - Read the label of all feeds, feed additives and medications to understand exactly what you are giving your animal.
 - Some feeds and medications have ingredients that are not readily apparent by the trade name.
2. Ask questions about anything you do not understand.
 - Have a working relationship with a veterinarian (valid Veterinary Client Patient Relationship) and ask them before giving any medicated feeds or medications.
 - Ask your feed supplier about any new feeds and what is included in them.

3. Follow label instructions for all medications and observe withdrawal times.
 - Consult with your veterinarian before giving any product to your animal as you get close to the next livestock show.
 - Only purchase and use feeds from reputable companies that provide an ingredient label.
 - Do not use a feed you get from someone else. The feed could potentially contain medications, and it is illegal to feed an animal

a feed that is not prescribed to that animal.

- Do not give human medicines to animals.

While drug screening programs help promote quality assurance, ultimately all individuals involved in youth livestock projects have a responsibility to ensure that their animals meet federal food safety guidelines. Remember that ethically treated animals will always be safe for human consumption and are a perfect example of youth livestock program success.



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