

Changes to flukicide regulation could limit treatments for dairy

By Rhian Price

Producers could be restricted from using certain products to combat fluke in dairy animals, unless manufacturers provide data on withdrawal periods.

The decision to introduce withdrawal periods on new labelling was taken by the European Commission, after some producers in Ireland were found to be using products incorrectly and residues of these substances were found in milk.

If manufacturers fail to provide data on withdrawal periods to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) within the next six months, most straight flukicide products will be restricted from use in dairy, limiting products available to farmers.

Under the new ruling, most straight flukicides containing the active ingredients triclabendazole, closulon, closantel, rafoxanide and nitroxylnil will be affected.

Sam Fletcher of the VMD says initially the substances under question did not have maximum residue limits (MRLs) set by the commission. Without these limits, he says, products containing these substances should not have been used for animals producing or intended to produce milk for human consumption.

"Because they were not authorised for use in dairy cattle they were being used off label and there were residues in milk being found in certain member states," he adds.

"As a result of the commission's decision, certain products cannot be used during the dry period and at certain stages of pregnancy, because it takes a long time for residues to fall below the milk MRLs, which have now been set for several of these substances," he adds.

Manufacturers are now being urged to conduct milk residue depletion studies to ascertain product-specific milk withdrawal periods.

In the meantime, the products are still available and farmers are being advised that they can continue to use them as specified on the labels. But as data remains unavailable on some products it could still lead to residue violations.

However, Mr Fletcher stresses that very few residue violations have been reported in the UK, adding: "We recognise this is a difficult situ-

ation and recommend that farmers speak to their vet, pharmacist or SQP [suitably qualified person] as appropriate for advice."

Vet Jemma Reed of Paragon Vets advises farmers to use only flukicide products with withdrawal periods clearly stated on the labels as best practice. "If it has a recommended milk withdrawal period you know exactly where you stand," she adds.



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Dairy farmers may be restricted from using some flukicides unless product labelling is addressed.



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Reference: 1. Woodbine K.A. et al. (2009) BMC Veterinary Research 5:5



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