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Buying veterinary products — read the label first

By G. L. Ward, Animal Health Division

When considering buying a veterinary chemical or processed feed, farmers will learn more by studying the label than by reading a volume of advertising literature. The label will help farmers to buy the right product, save money and avoid poisoning themselves, their livestock and other people.

Chemicals for animal health, and processed feeds must be registered with the Department of Agriculture. Registration is intended to insure that products are effective for the purpose they are sold, and safe when used according to instructions. The Department of Agriculture has registered over 1500 products for treating and feeding animals, and is continuously checking new products before they can be sold.

Part of the registration process is to examine and approve the label. The label must conform to the strict regulations of both the Department of Agriculture and the Public Health Department. Each label must include all that a farmer wants to know before he buys the products, and all that must be known before the product is stored or used.

It is important to check the label each time a product is bought, as the manufacturer may have changed the concentration and therefore the dose rate.

Information on the label thus includes:
- The main constituents and the analysis.
- How to store the product for safety and for best results, for example “keep out of the reach of children” and “store in refrigerator, do not freeze”.
- A list of accurate proven uses for the product with safe but effective dose rates and any special precautions, such as “do not use on pregnant ewes” or “do not treat hot thirsty sheep”.
- How long to wait after treatment before the animal should be slaughtered for human consumption or before its eggs or milk should be consumed.
- How to use the product without being poisoned, and how to treat a case of poisoning.
- How to dispose of empty containers or unused chemical.