

Animal Handling Standards Issued For Vaccine Producers

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued new standards--which become effective July 14 -- for the care and handling of animals used to produce and test animal vaccines and other biologics. At the same time, USDA

deleted from its regulations special requirements for animals used in manufacturing and testing hog cholera products. This is a procedural matter, since hog cholera products have not been produced in this country since the state-federal cooperative campaign to eradicate this disease reached its final stages.

The new requirements for animals used by biologics producers are intended to insure the quality of biological products and safeguard human health, according to officials of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). They will ensure that production animals:

--Are healthy before entering the manufacturer's premises. Animals will be re-examined before tests begin and he monitored throughout the test period. Any diseased animals will

have to be kept apart from healthy ones.

--Are not vaccinated or given other biologics unless vaccination is compatible with test evaluations.

--Are quarantined on the premises if they are exposed to disease. Animals will not be allowed to move out of quarantine unless specific procedures are followed to prevent the spread of disease.

--Are removed from the premises only under specified conditions.

APHIS officials pointed out that some of the new standards expand on animal care requirements under the Animal Welfare Act of 1970, which also is enforced by APHIS. Therefore, inspectors checking biologics production also will check for compliance with that Act. Authority for the new regulations, however, is under

the Virus-Serum-Toxin Act of 1913, which concerns production standards and quality control of veterinary biologics. Under this authority, APHIS regulates manufacturers who sell veterinary biologics interstate, by setting standards for the safety, purity and effectiveness of their products.

The new standards for production animals were first proposed in March. Interested persons were invited to comment on the proposal by May 21. Comments were received from four of the manufacturers involved, and several of their suggestions were adopted in the final wording of the regulations. None of the changes alters the intent of the March proposal, APHIS officials said.

The new standards were published in the Federal Register June 13.

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Distress Grain Loan Program Authorized

Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz authorized a broad-scale distress grain loan program for farmers in states where there is a shortage of available storage space, drying facilities and rail transportation. The action will make recourse loans possible for producers of wheat, barley, oats, sorghum, rye and corn.

Under provisions of the distress grain loan program, state Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committees will determine the feasibility of storing commodities on the ground, or may authorize the making of loans on grain stored in temporary facilities on or off the farm. The grain to be placed under loan must be stored identity preserved, except that grain may be stored commingled outside at a warehouse or other acceptable facility, provided the producer furnishes weight tickets or other evidence of the quantity he contributed. Weight tickets on commingled grain must be certified as to quantity and location.

Under the regular loan and

purchase programs, commodities stored on the ground are not eligible for loans.

Loans will be available through the later of: (1) 30 days after announcement of the program by the state ASC committee; or (2) 30 days after the producer completes harvest of his crops.

Other provisions announced by the Secretary include:

--Loans will be made at 75 percent of the basic county loan rate for the county in which the commodity is located. They will mature 90 days after disbursement, or earlier on demand.

--If a producer places his commodity in eligible farm or warehouse storage on or before the loan matures, he may obtain a regular loan.

--If a regular loan is not obtained, the amount of the loan, plus interest must be repaid to the Commodity Credit Corporation.

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