Veterinary Feed Directive & Economics of Feeding Cattle in 2017 – McIntosh County Providing Education to Prepare for 2017

The Situation
New regulations and decreased prices have a dramatic effect on cattle producers. On January 1, 2017 the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) regulation will begin. This will limit how producers can purchase feed grade antibiotics that are labeled as a veterinary feed directive product. McIntosh County has a number of producers whom will be affected by this legislation. Encouraging a relationship with a veterinarian as well as record keeping is important. Along with the new regulations cattle prices have decreased dramatically from a year ago prompting livestock producers to explore feed efficiencies when backgrounding.

Extension Response
McIntosh County held three workshops to address how the veterinary feed directive regulation will impact producers as well as how to determine and lower feed cost to gain.

Impacts
Attending these workshops were 53 cow/calf producers, 3 stockers, 28 backgrounders, 6 feeders, along with 2 veterinarians, 5 vet techs, and 1 loan officer. All producers said they already had a working relationship with a veterinarian. However, only half of the producers currently keep record of antibiotics used in their herd. Of the producers that said they did not keep a record, 93% said that they intended to start keeping records of all antibiotics used in their herds, 86% intend to make changes to their operation management with many producers saying they will incorporate more record-keeping.

Feedback
Producers indicated they would incorporate the following management changes: “Changing vaccine program to avoid using feed meds.” “Keep a more accurate record of antibiotic treatment in our herd. Health records form will be useful.” “Better budget and expense report.” “Better ration.”

When asked the most important thing learned producers answered the following: Ratios of feeding, cost per pound gain, medication, time to sell vs feeding. VFD rules. Calculating your rate of gain for profitability. Feed alternatives. Cost to background. Looking at different feed combinations to decrease cost.

Public Value Statement
Earning and keeping consumers’ trust is vital to the long-term sustainability of livestock agriculture. Investing time in keeping ranchers abreast of new regulations and improving the economics of their business benefits our rural communities and economies.

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