



# Animal Drug Testing Programs: Considerations for Youth Livestock Exhibitors

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Animal drug testing programs are common at youth livestock exhibitions across the country. Individual policies for each show will vary greatly, but the basic goals of these programs are the same:

- To ensure a safe and wholesome food supply
- To ensure open and fair competition

It is important to read and understand the policies and guidelines for all shows that you attend, especially the rules regarding the animal drug testing program. Regardless of the show, two of the most important items to know and understand are:

1. Withdrawal times for any medication you use on your animal
2. The approved-use status of each medication for the species of your animal

## Note Withdrawal Times

A withdrawal time is the amount of time after a specific medicine is given that it is acceptable to market the animal. The medicine label or medicated feed label will provide this information. If the withdrawal time has passed, the animal is generally considered safe to enter the food chain.

It is important to note that several factors can affect the actual withdrawal time. For example, there are situations when the printed withdrawal time may be longer, so you must work closely with your veterinarian to ensure that you understand the appropriate withdrawal times.

Here are some reasons why your animal might test positive for a substance at a competition even after the medication's labeled withdrawal period has passed:

- You gave your animal a higher dose than indicated on the label or gave your animal a higher dose than your veterinarian directed
- You administered the medicine in a manner or location not directed by the label (for example, you gave the medicine subcutaneously instead of intramuscularly)
- You gave your animal repeated doses over time
- You did not store the medication properly

## Pay Attention to Approved Use

You also need to make sure that a medication you give to your animal is approved for use on your animal. An unapproved use is any substance given to a species for which it is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This includes animal medications that are not approved for a given species, medications used for humans that are not approved for animals, and medications that are not approved for humans or animals. It is important to note that veterinarians can prescribe many substances to unapproved species. If the veterinarian orders such a medication, the veterinarian will also provide the withdrawal time for the substance.

While some substances may be FDA-approved for a given species, they still may be considered a violation at a specific animal show. This is especially true when considering medications that have anti-inflammatory properties or are considered to have pain-relieving properties. It is your responsibility to read and understand all exhibition rules for the shows in which you are exhibiting.

This table provides a limited list of substances and their FDA-approved animal species.

Paylean® (ractopamine hydrochloride)	Finishing swine — not less than 150 pounds (not approved for breeding gilts)
Optaflexx® (ractopamine hydrochloride)	Finishing beef cattle (not approved for breeding heifers)
Zilmax® (zilapaterol hydrochloride)	Finishing beef cattle — 3-day slaughter withdrawal (not approved for breeding heifers)
Banamine® (flunixin meglumine)	Beef and dairy cattle — 4-day slaughter withdrawal; 36-hour milk withdrawal (IV only, dramatic withdrawal extensions required for unapproved routes of administration)
Banamine-S	Swine — 12-day slaughter withdrawal
Tylenol®, Advil® and other human pain relievers	None
Human antibiotics	Very limited approved antibiotics for food animals
Caffeine	None
Illegal drugs such as marijuana and cocaine	None

Here are some common do's and don't's to consider as you prepare your livestock project for exhibition.

## Do's

- **Know exactly what you feed your animals.**

Read the labels of all feeds, feed additives, and medications you give your animal so you understand exactly the ingredients of the feed. Some feeds and medications have other ingredients that are not readily apparent by the trade name.

- **Ask questions about anything you do not understand.**

Have a working relationship with a veterinarian and ask them before you give your animal any medicated feeds or medications. The U.S. FDA has a Veterinary Feed Directive rule. Under this rule, a veterinarian must have an established veterinary-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) to issue any prescription. This means that the veterinarian must have sufficient knowledge of the patient or herd by virtue of patient examination and/or visits to the farm/facility and to provide any necessary follow-up evaluation or care.

Ask the feed company about new feeds and what is in them.

- **While at a show, keep all sources of feeds secure.**

Check your animals frequently and be alert for anything out of the ordinary with your animals.

- **Follow label instructions for all medications and observe withdrawal times.**

Recognize that withdrawal times are averages for a large group of animals. Depending on the animal's size and the dose given, some medications can still be detectable after the indicated withdrawal time.

Consult with your veterinarian before you give any product to your animal as you get close to the next livestock show.

## Don't's

- **Do not use a feed you get from someone else.**

Only purchase and use a feed from reputable companies that provide an ingredient label.

- **Do not feed human foods to animals.**

Chocolate and some drinks contain caffeine, which is an unapproved substance for animals.

- **Do not give human medicines to animals unless your veterinarian specifically orders it.**

These medications are designed for humans not animals.

While animal drug testing 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 and the policies of the individual livestock exhibitions. As a youth livestock exhibitor, you must consider the animal's wellness at all times. If your animal is injured or becomes ill, then the best decision may be to not exhibit the animal and allow it to heal or get better.

Administering medications to mask injury or illness is unacceptable. Remember, as an exhibitor it is your responsibility to ensure your animals are properly treated and cared for, resulting in a safe and trusted animal agriculture industry. This is the ultimate example of an effective and meaningful youth livestock program.

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