

Notice: Regulations regarding Importation of Veterinary Drugs - Are farmers permitted to import veterinary drugs?

Prudent and proper use of veterinary drugs is critical to food safety, and is an integral element in the Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) program.

ISSUE: The CQM program requires producers to use veterinary drugs approved in Canada for use in dairy cattle according to the label or veterinary prescriptions. Previously, it was commonly understood that the CQM program also permitted producers to use veterinary drugs approved in another country for use in dairy cattle, as long as they had a valid veterinary prescription from their Canadian veterinarian for each product. However, this was not completely correct.

Recently, the Veterinary Drugs Directorate (VDD) has worked closely with the CQM Technical Committee to provide clarifications on the regulations regarding the importation of veterinary drugs.

Federal Regulations:

1. **Permitted:** Farmers can legally import veterinary drugs designated as **Over-The-Counter** (according to Canadian definition) for use on their own cattle.
2. **Illegal:** It is illegal for farmers to import veterinary drugs designated as **Prescription** into Canada by any means (e.g. mail, courier, in-person). Two exceptions apply, which are explained further below:
 - a) A veterinarian importing for use on own herd / cattle;
 - b) A farmer, travelling with a cow that needs a prescription while in the other country, bringing back supplies related to that prescription.

BACKGROUND: The *Food and Drugs Act* (FDA) and the *Food and Drug Regulations* (FDR) govern the sale of veterinary drugs in Canada. The “Import and Export Policy for Health Products under the Food and Drugs Act and its Regulations” outlines the policies applicable to the Own-Use Importation rule, which is the importation of veterinary drugs for use on your own cattle in the specific circumstances listed below (i.e. not for sale).

Prescription drug definition: a drug is classified as a prescription drug if any of its medicinal ingredients are listed on the [Prescription Drug List](#), which is accessible on Health Canada's website. The Prescription Drug List replaced Schedule F in the FDR in December 2013.

Over-The Counter drug definition: a drug is classified as Over-The-Counter (OTC) *if none of its medicinal ingredients* are listed on the Prescription Drug List.

Exceptions: there are two exceptions that apply to the own-use importation ban on Prescription Drugs.

1. Section C.01.045 in the FDR states that **no person**, other than a practitioner (e.g. veterinarian), a drug manufacturer, a wholesale druggist, a pharmacist or a resident of a foreign country while a visitor in Canada can import a prescription drug.

So, a veterinarian is permitted to import a prescription drug; however, not for further sale, unless they meet all of the regulatory requirements related to that sale, which includes oversight by the VDD.

2. In Section 5.2.1 of the Import and Export Policy for Health Products under the Food and Drugs Act and its Regulations, Canadians returning from abroad are permitted to bring with them **on their person** a single course of treatment or a 90-day supply based on the directions for use, whichever is less, of a prescription drug. The drug must be for use on an animal for which the individual is responsible and **with whom they are travelling**.

The purpose of this exception is to ensure that people do not have to interrupt a course of treatment for themselves or their animals that are travelling with them. **Please note that importing a prescription drug by any other means than in-person is not permitted.**

Drug Identification:

Prescription Drug: a prescription drug has the **Pr** symbol on its label and a Drug Identification Number (DIN).

Over-The-Counter (OTC) Drug: an OTC drug does not have a special symbol on its label, but it does have a DIN.

Please Note: prescription or OTC designations differ from country to country. As a result, the lack of a Pr symbol on a label of a drug from another country does NOT mean that it is classified as OTC in Canada. You need to check to make sure that the medicinal ingredients are not on the Canadian Prescription Drug List.

NEW RULES? NOPE

Before December 2013, farmers were not permitted to import prescription drugs on Schedule F, Part I. Now farmers are not permitted to import drugs whose ingredients are on the Prescription Drug List. The content of Schedule F and the Prescription Drug List is

essentially the same; therefore, these rules have been in place and the same for many years.

The Canadian Border Services Agency is responsible to enforce the law. They can confiscate product, tag a person for more scrutiny in the future, and issue fines.

BOTTOM LINE:

- 1) Producers can import over-the-counter products legally (designated as OTC by Canadian definition), and use them on their own cattle under the CQM program if they have written directions for use from their veterinarian (CQM Record 8).
- 2) **It is illegal for a producer to import (by any means) any product that contains an ingredient that is on the Prescription Drug List**, unless the producer is a veterinarian or is only importing a single course of treatment needed for an animal with which the producer is travelling (i.e. the cow is with you).