

Banned Mammalian Protein What Does it Mean?

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Feeds for ruminant animals should not contain meat or bone meal derived from ruminants.

What should 4-H members know?

For a number of years, 4-H members exhibiting livestock have signed an “Ethics Affidavit and Statement of Disclosure.” This disclosure has asked exhibitors to certify that they have not used any non-approved drugs on their animals and that if any approved drugs were used, the withdrawal time had passed. In 2001, an additional statement was added to the affidavits, stating:

“If exhibiting beef or sheep, we attest, that to the best of our knowledge, the finishing ration fed to animals under our ownership does not contain prohibited mammalian protein (i.e. ruminant meat & bone meal).”

The statement was added in an effort to decrease consumer’s fears of BSE, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, which often is referred to in the media as “mad cow disease.” The outbreak of BSE in the United Kingdom was associated with feeding of certain products, such as ruminant meat and bone meal, to livestock. Unfortunately, BSE also has been found in cattle native to the U.S. and not feeding meat and bone meal from ruminants is a way to prevent the spread of BSE to other cattle.

In the past, ruminant meat and bone meal was a common protein source in feeds. It is a byproduct from harvest and is made by rendering, or heating, meat scraps and bones that are considered not edible for humans.

Is this new?

No, this really is not new. In 1997, the Food and Drug Administration banned feeding certain “mammalian proteins” to ruminant animals such as cattle, sheep and goats, bison, elk and deer. Ruminant meat and bone meal is one of the feeds referred to as “banned mammalian protein” or “prohibited materials.” After 2001, some companies that harvest cattle

required people from whom they buy cattle to certify that ruminant meat and bone meal had not been fed to the cattle. Ruminant animals include but are not limited to cattle, sheep, goats, bison, elk and deer.

How do I know if the feed contains ruminant meat and bone meal?

Since this rule has been in effect since 1997, feeds for cattle, sheep, goats, bison, elk and deer on the market today should not contain meat and bone meal derived from ruminants. However, to be sure, read the feed label.

Many types of animal protein are still acceptable to feed to ruminant and are not considered “banned mammalian protein” or “prohibited material.” Many labels for cattle, sheep and goat feeds now are more specific in listing the type of animal protein the feed contains, but unfortunately, there are still some feed tags around that list only “animal protein.” A feed label may simply list “animal protein” as a feed ingredient because there are many different sources of protein that originate from animals. The problem with these labels is that you cannot determine if ruminant meat and bone meal is included. If in doubt, ask the feed manufacturer. Usually, there is a toll-free number for the manufacturer on the feed labels.

Summary

Do not feed ruminants prohibited animal proteins. Do not feed cattle, sheep, goats, bison, elk or deer feeds manufactured for non-ruminant species because these feeds may contain prohibited animal proteins. Keep copies of labels and invoices for all purchased feeds that contain animal proteins, whether they contain prohibited material or not, for at least one year.

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