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2017 National Junior Angus Show  
senior public speaking winner



## Veterinary feed directive

*John Maxwell once said, “Change is inevitable; progress is optional.” No one could have ever imagined the strides that agriculture has made over the years. Because we have embraced change, agriculturalists are producing more with less land and inputs than ever before.*

We have combines that can drive themselves and genomic tests that can pinpoint the exact genes for the betterment of our herds.

Change can be a very good thing — if you allow it to be.

One big change that recently challenged American beef producers was the veterinary feed directive (VFD). Although this new regulation did not seem like a step in the right direction for producers, it assists in building trust between consumers and their food.

The veterinary feed directive is a regulation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to control the use of fed antibiotics in any food-producing species, even if it will not enter the food chain. Its purpose was to promote disease resistance, which is a big issue in animal and human medicine.

Dr. Mike Apley writes, “...both human and veterinary medicine have evolved to rely on antibiotics to prevent, control and treat bacterial disease.”

The overuse of antibiotics can cause bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic, making it completely ineffective. The VFD promotes the proper usage of antibiotics by requiring producers to get clearance from their veterinarian before using any antibiotics administered in feed or water. Because of this common practice of using antibiotics to

prevent disease or as a growth promotant, the “bugs” are becoming immune to the medicine. The VFD serves to control the use of antibiotics so that it does not become a bigger problem.

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*Consumers played a large role in the VFD by pressuring the FDA to take action in regulating the use of antibiotics.*

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The veterinary feed directive was developed by gathering input from many different perspectives. Unlike most policies that confront the agriculture industry, when writing this legislation, the FDA reached out to agricultural organizations and veterinarians to make sure the transition was as effortless as possible. The National Feed and Grain Association submitted suggestions to the FDA, and almost all were used verbatim.

One of the reasons that the VFD was created was due to consumer concern. People want to make sure that their food is safe to eat and the proper production practices are in place. It has been a concern for many years that using antibiotics as growth promotants could cause harm to the public. Consumers played a large role

in the VFD by pressuring the FDA to take action in regulating the use of antibiotics.

### Implementing the VFD

Ready or not, the VFD is here. So, now what?

The first step producers had to take was to ensure a good relationship with their veterinarian. Producers need to have a valid VCPR, which stands for veterinary-client-patient relationship. This is a fancy way of saying that you have a relationship with your veterinarian.

If producers need to administer an antibiotic through feed or water, they still can. They now just need to make sure their vet is willing to partner with them to provide the proper treatment.

Keep in mind that some antibiotics that used to be over-the-counter will now require a prescription. Veterinarians have their hands tied when it comes to allowing producers to use medicated feed for extra-label use, so it is important that there is cooperation between producers and their veterinarians.

### Improving management

Without having easy access to antibiotics, producers will need to make some changes to protect their animals from disease. We have been



PHOTO BY SHELBY METTLEN

using medicated feed for a long time, so it is easy to think that this is the only effective practice, but there are other ways. The key is improving management practices.

Veterinarian Randall Spare recommends focusing on nutrition, low-stress handling and appropriate immunizations. It is also important to be meticulous with recordkeeping, ensuring that all animals are getting the proper care, as well as developing a biosecurity plan with your veterinarian.

These are simple steps everyone can take that can lessen the dependence on antibiotics and improve herd health. However, animals can still get sick, and that's where producers will need to work with their veterinarian if necessary.

There will be more regulations on antibiotics and other management practices in the future, so take the time to prepare now.

## Assuring consumers

As previously mentioned, the VFD came as a result of public perception about the use of antibiotics in livestock. The public has been pressuring the FDA to put stricter regulations on antibiotics for a long time due to concerns about antibiotic resistance in humans. Oklahoma State University found that

consumers make their beef-buying decisions based off of four factors: price, taste, nutrition and safety. It is clear that the VFD came as a safety concern, and if this keeps people buying beef, then so be it. People want to know that antibiotics are being used responsibly.

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There are many regulations ensuring that America's food source is safe, but what about before the animal gets to the slaughterhouse? How can consumers and the government know that meat animals are being raised responsibly on the farm? Due to this fear, rules like the VFD are created and implemented so that people feel comfortable with where their food is coming from. Now, instead of wondering, they know that antibiotics are only being used when necessary.

In the future, it is vital that we do a better job of being open about our practices. People are concerned about animal welfare, environmental issues and food safety, and they have

more influence than ever before. I only see this becoming more of a threat in the future.

Now, I believe that we should embrace the challenges that come our way, but that's not to say that we shouldn't advocate for ourselves.

Although rules like the VFD are not too difficult to abide by, we need to be proactive advocates to make sure that we are not faced with harsh regulations crippling our industry in the future. This is only the beginning. We need to be smarter moving forward about our production practices and address consumer concern before it gets out of hand.

The VFD is a rule that has confronted our industry, and it is up to us to implement it into our everyday practices. Although the VFD has created some challenges within the industry, looking ahead, whether this pushes us forward or backward is up to us. At the end of the day, it encourages us to improve the health of our herds and increases consumer confidence in our product, which, in today's day and age, is a step in the right direction. **AJ**

*Editor's Note: Keegan Cassidy won the senior division in Prepared Public Speaking at the 2017 National Junior Angus Show in Des Moines, Iowa, with this presentation.*

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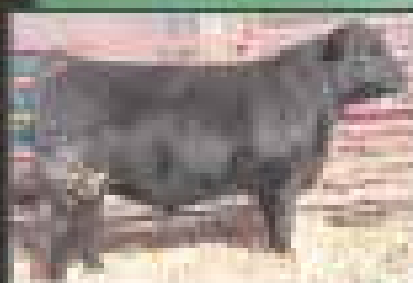
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EPD	REA	WEW	YLD	MILK	OW
3	2	191	1185	22	96
Mat'd	RE	YW	EB		
131	1.04	162.01	1154.94		



**Dufresh November 1507**  
AWA 1500813304

EPD	REA	WEW	YLD	MILK	OW
7	1.8	175	1154	30	121
Mat'd	RE	YW	EB		
161	.85	179.00	1163.20		

Both of these bulls are making some of the best females in the world out of the great 150000 day updated 2016 data. These bulls are doing really well in reproductive performance and are also good mothers and good producers. They have very good feed efficiency and are also good producers of milk. They are also good producers of milk and are also good producers of milk.



**Grand Oaks Hill Lady Selected**  
150 1500



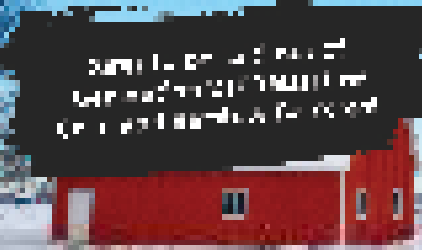
**Dufresh March 1501**  
AWA 1500813770

EPD	REA	WEW	YLD	MILK	OW
11	1.1	160	1124	14	54
Mat'd	RE	YW	EB		
144	1.100	144.00	1124.00		



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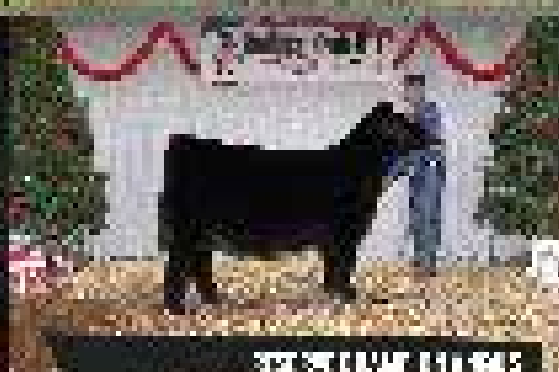
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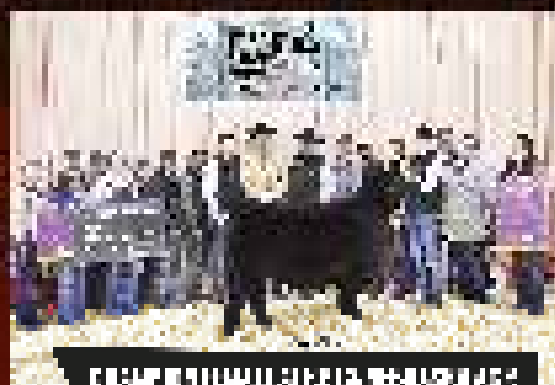
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Allan's Angus, Prairie, Missouri, USA, in Photo



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ALLANSON WINDS, 2017 BULL  
Allan's Angus, Prairie, Missouri, USA, in Photo



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