

# Industry Puts Welfare First

Company pulls product from marketplace until audit can verify safety, performance.

**O**n Aug. 16, 2013, Merck Animal Health announced it is temporarily pulling Zilmax® from the market in the United States and Canada until a scientific audit can be conducted to verify the safety and performance of the product. Concerns came to the forefront when Tyson Fresh Meats sent a letter to its suppliers announcing it would stop purchasing animals fed zilpaterol as of Sept. 6, 2013, citing concerns about lameness and an unwillingness to move among some cattle fed the beta-agonist.

“At Merck Animal Health, the health and well-being of animals is our first and foremost priority. We also take very seriously our commitment to providing safe, effective products that are developed based on comprehensive research, rigorous testing and sound science,” the company said in its Aug. 16 announcement. “We believe in the science that supports Zilmax and are confident in its safety and performance. Reinforcing this science and data-based approach, Merck Animal Health has announced it has strengthened its commitment to its Five-Step Approach to Ensuring Responsible Beef (see sidebar).”

In conjunction with independent experts, the company will conduct a scientific audit, which will monitor the process of feeding zilpaterol and will follow identified cattle from the feedyard to the packing plant to determine potential causes of lameness and other mobility issues during feeding, transportation, offloading and staging at the processing facility. The company will also do a thorough review of potential compounding factors, such as nutrition, transportation and receiving facilities.

The company said it opted to pull the product from the market to allow sufficient time for the establishment of valid study protocols, identification of feeders and packers to participate in the audit, and creation of a third-party team to oversee this process and validate its results.

“We remain confident in the safety of

the product, based on our own extensive research and that of regulators and academic institutions, and are committed to the well-being of the animals that receive it,” says KJ Varma, senior vice president of global research and development for Merck Animal Health. “This important step demonstrates our

commitment to providing our industry partners with data that will reaffirm confidence in Zilmax. We sincerely regret that this situation creates business challenges for our customers, but it is critical to ensure

that this process is conducted appropriately and with rigorous scientific measures. After the five-step plan is completed, the results will be shared publicly.”

The company also said it was accelerating the development of an advisory board that would bring together industry experts, producers, academics and company leadership to promote an open dialogue on animal well-being and help shape and strengthen the company’s animal health and well-being program in the future.

**“At Merck Animal Health, the health and well-being of animals is our first and foremost priority.”**

**— Merck Animal Health**



## Merck Animal Health Five-Step Approach to Ensuring Responsible Beef

1. Merck Animal Health is committed to re-certifying every feeder/nutritionist/veterinarian that feeds Zilmax® to cattle. The re-certification process will begin immediately. Special attention will be given to feed mixing and determining which cattle are good candidates for the use of beta-agonists. We will engage third-party experts to provide periodic review of certifications.
2. Within the next 30 days, Merck Animal Health is committed to reaching out to packers and suppliers to initiate a scientific audit, which will focus on the feeding of Zilmax, and will follow those cattle from the feedyard to the packing plant to determine potential causes of lameness and other mobility issues during feeding, transportation, offloading and staging at the processing facility. Merck Animal Health will do a thorough review of potential compounding factors — such as nutrition, transportation, receiving facilities, etc. We will perform this audit in conjunction with third-party experts.
3. Based on our findings, Merck Animal Health is committed to reinforcing appropriate management practices for feeder customers to include overall nutrition and feeding objectives, animal handling, low-stress environments and transportation.
4. Continuing in our work to advance animal well-being, we will form the Merck Animal Health Advisory Board within the next 30 days, made up of representatives from small, medium and large feeders, packers, cow-calf operators, as well as animal health and nutrition experts, to review available data. If additional recommended management practices are needed, these will be identified, shared and promptly implemented.
5. Merck Animal Health takes our responsibility very seriously and is committed to sharing all of these findings and to being transparent.

**— Merck Animal Health,  
Aug. 13, 2013**