To ensure a safe food supply, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees the use of animal medications. Some medications have been approved for use without a veterinarian's permission, while others require permission. Recently, the FDA changed how some antibiotic medications, which are important to human medicine, are used for animal feed. Since January 1, 2017, these medications require a Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) order to be used in a medicated feed.

What is a medicated feed and why is it used?
Medicated feed is feed with a specific drug added to it. Medicated feed is fed to animals to prevent illness or treat an animal when it is sick. Medicated feeds are just one of the good animal care and well-being practices farmers and animal owners use to keep their animals healthy.

Is all feed medicated?
No, when you purchase feed, you have the option to buy feed without medications mixed into it.

Who is impacted by these changes?
Livestock owners, including youth with animal projects, who have decided to feed their animals medicated feeds.

For more information on the Veterinary Feed Directive, visit: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/
To get a VFD order, you must have an established veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with a veterinarian. A VCPR is a working relationship between a veterinarian and a person who raises livestock (client). The veterinarian’s primary role is to help and advise the client in determining which medications are appropriate for their animals (the patients).

How do you know if you need a VFD order?
As seen in the example, feed labels of VFD drugs have the following statement: “Caution: Federal law restricts medicated feed containing this VFD drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.”

What are examples of medications that will require a VFD order?
Examples of feed-grade medications moving to VFD drug status are chlortetracycline, tylosin and penicillin. The list can be found at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/.

Where can I buy feed with my VFD order?
You can buy VFD feeds at any mill, retailer or other establishment listed as a distributor or manufacturer with the FDA. The list can be found at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/md/.

How do feed stores check for VFD orders?
Previously, VFD feeds were purchased without documentation at your feed store or mill. However, since January 1, 2017, you must first present a VFD order, written by a veterinarian, to purchase VFD feeds.

What records will I need to keep?
Records will need to be kept by the livestock owner, veterinarian and feed sales company for two years. The original VFD order will be kept by the veterinarian. The livestock owner and feed mill must also keep copies on file.

Many over-the-counter feed-grade antibiotics were moved to VFD status on January 1, 2017.