



# Disposal of Veterinary Antibiotics

For Pet Owners and Farm Level Use



## Concerns Related to Disposal of Outdated or Unused Human and Veterinary Antibiotics

- 1) Trace amounts of pharmaceuticals have been found in drinking water and have been identified in the environment and wildlife.
- 2) Waste water treatment facilities typically do not remove pharmaceuticals from the water they treat.
- 3) Antibiotics, when flushed down the toilet or drain, can disrupt the microbiology of sewage systems, septic systems, and waste water treatment plants.

***Dumping antibiotics down the toilet or sink is the least desirable disposal method.\****

**\*Note:** Some prescription drug labels or accompanying patient information (primarily controlled substances and not antibiotics) specifically recommend flushing those medications down the toilet instead of throwing the drugs in the trash. In those instances, the FDA does recommend following the label guidelines and flushing the drugs.

## Recommendations for Appropriate Disposal of Small Amounts of Outdated or Unused Antibiotics

This issue is being discussed at the national and state levels. There will likely be more detailed guidance on appropriate disposal of all pharmaceuticals in the near future. In the interim, most experts recommend the following:

- 1) Use take back programs when available
  - a) Not available in many locations.
  - b) Some communities hold "Pharmaceutical Collection" events during which community officials will accept and dispose of unwanted antibiotics.
- 2) Until collection programs are more widely available, disposal in the trash may be the best available method. When discarding unused antibiotics, protect children, pets, and wildlife by taking the following precautions:
  - a) COMBINE WITH A MATERIAL THAT WOULD MAKE THE PRODUCT UNDESIREABLE:
    - i) Place medications in a plastic bag.
    - ii) Add used kitty litter or coffee grounds (or any material that makes it less appealing for animals and children to eat) into the plastic bag.
  - b) DISCARD: Place in a secondary bag and dispose in the trash.

**Sources:** Haskell, S, Ormond C, Occhipinti L and Powers E. *Waste management: Expired drugs.* Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 2003; 223 (1): 51-52; Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center. *Disposal of Pharmaceuticals.* 2007 Feb. Available at: [http://www.co.dallas.ia.us/envhealth/forms/Pharmaceutical\\_Disposal\\_02-07.pdf](http://www.co.dallas.ia.us/envhealth/forms/Pharmaceutical_Disposal_02-07.pdf)

