

Buying Livestock Drugs in California

Morgan Doran, UCCE Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor

Dr. Gabriele Maier, Professor of Extension, Beef Cattle Herd Health and Production, UC Davis

Dr. Roselle Busch, Professor of Extension, Sheep and Goat Herd Health and Production, UC Davis

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A livestock producer recently contacted UCCE regarding a problem he was having getting livestock dewormers shipped to a California address from out-of-state online retailers. Three different online retailers told him that they don't have a license to ship the products to California. This was a headscratcher since the same retailers have previously shipped the same products to California.

The problem triggered an exploration into the regulation of livestock drugs in California, which is helpful to understand the issue encountered with the online retailers.

Below is a brief description of how livestock drugs are regulated in California, with many references to lists published by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and a final suggestion on what to do if you encounter the same denial to sell a dewormer or other livestock drug.

Here are the basics of California Livestock Drug Regulations

When you buy livestock drugs from a store or an online retailer you usually don't know or need to know the regulatory process that permits such transactions, unless you are buying an antimicrobial drug that requires a prescription. Drugs that don't require a prescription are classified as either a "livestock drug" or a "restricted livestock drug." Here are the different livestock drug classifications and their corresponding regulations:

1. **Livestock Drug** – does not have any restrictions to sell or purchase
2. **Restricted Livestock Drug** – the drug retailer is required to have an approved retailer license issued by CDFA to sell the drug in California
3. **Restricted Livestock Drug, Rx** – the retailer has the same requirement as with a Restricted Livestock Drug and the buyer must have a veterinary prescription to purchase the drug

Some restricted livestock drugs are further classified as Type A VFD (Veterinary Feed Directive) or Type A Non-VFD, but most livestock producers don't need to worry about Type A livestock drugs unless they are a confined animal feeding operation (CAFO).

Here you can download a complete list of [CDFA Approved Livestock Drug Registrations](#) and their classifications.

More on the Drug Classifications

Most drugs for livestock fall under the "Livestock Drug" classification and include drugs such as antiseptics, topical medications, pain relievers, vitamins, minerals, nutrients, insecticides, and many more.

Drugs in the “Restricted Livestock Drug” category include hormones, dewormers, coccidiostats, medicated feed additives and a handful of other drugs. Here you can find a list of [“Restricted Livestock Drugs.”](#) Purchasing “Restricted Livestock Drugs” in California is typically not a problem unless the retailer does not have an approved retailer license with CDFA.

Drugs classified as “Restricted Livestock Drug, Rx” include medically important antimicrobial drugs such as penicillin, oxytetracycline, sulfamethazine and others. Here is a list of [“Restricted Livestock Drugs, Rx”](#) that were available without a prescription prior to 2018 in California.” These are drugs that require a prescription from your veterinarian to be purchased in the state of California, as mandated by the Livestock: Use of Antimicrobial Drugs law ([FAC § 14400 – 14408](#)). Other livestock drugs, including antimicrobials such as tulathromycin or gamithromycin have always required a prescription and will continue to do so in the future. If you do not have a veterinarian’s prescription, then you must establish a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with a veterinarian so that the veterinarian knows you and your livestock operation and has confidence in your animal care practices and ability to properly use and administer the prescription drugs.

Why Did the Retailers Decline Selling the Dewormer Products

While one of the retailers clearly does not have a retailer license to sell restricted livestock drugs in California, the other two retailers do have an approved retailer license. When we contacted the two retailers who do have an approved retailer license, they both indicated that the purchases were denied due to a website error and suggested that the purchaser call their customer service phone number to order the restricted products. Given this response we suspect there may be confusion or glitches among some out-of-state online retailers on selling restricted livestock drugs in California. A contributing factor may be recent changes made across the nation regarding medically important antimicrobials. On June 11, 2023, the US Food and Drug Administration implemented GFI # 263 and all medically important antimicrobials in the nation now require a prescription from a veterinarian. The rest of the country essentially now follows what California has already been practicing since 2018. The drugs that were previously “Restricted Livestock Drugs, Rx” are now Federally labeled as Rx drugs and no longer require a special designation for sale to California residents. It did not, however, change the label status of other “Restricted Livestock Drugs” in California.

If you find yourself in a similar situation in which an online retailer declines the sale of a dewormer product or other restricted livestock drug, you can first check if the retailer has an approved retailer license using this [CDFA Restricted Livestock Drug Licensee list](#). If the retailer is listed as having an approved license then you should call their customer service number to order the product and let them know of the website error so that it can be corrected.

You can find all the referenced lists of restricted livestock drugs, licensed retailers and information about the Livestock Drug Program in California at this CDFA website <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/ffldrs/LivestockDrug.html>.