

# CFIA Overreach

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is pressing ahead with major feed manufacturing regulation changes. These changes, if they become law as currently written may severely threaten the ability of any feed mill to produce feed for certain types of “claim” pig/pork products such as Raised Without Antibiotics (RWA), Animal Product or Animal By-Product Free, Ractopamine Free, and possibly others. As such, it could also negatively affect the ability of producers who raise these pigs to do so cost-competitively.

By way of background, in November 2015, CFIA released a ‘Framework Proposal’ of what their new modernized feed regulations would entail. That document contained language that made it difficult to fully grasp the full direction, scope and outcomes of this modernization process, and as such it was difficult to comment on. Further information was provided from last summer through to late November 2016. Over that time CFIA released a number of separate documents with more detail about what items were up for change and a comment period followed the release of each section. However, some of the information within these updates was still vague, most notably the information related to permissible claims and RWA production.

The following are some of the highlights and comments that I have based on the information released by CFIA:

- There will be a list of “pre-approved” claims that can be put on a feed label (feed tag) provided that CFIA’s requirements are met for that given claim. At this point, one of the biggest issues of any in this list of claims is the requirements for RWA production.
- CFIA’s current intention is to mandate that any feed being produced with the RWA claim would have to be produced at facility that is completely free of antibiotics. This stands in contrast to past requirements whereby the feed industry had the ability to produce RWA feeds in the same facility as their conventional production. This ability to do so was as long as they met the scrutiny of independent 3rd party audits as well as CFIA audits. The operation had to clearly demonstrate proper sequencing/flush procedures which proved any claimed RWA feed was free of antibiotic residues.
- Based on this newly proposed legislation, it would seem that CFIA believes these measures were not adequate and that any mill that has medications within their facility cannot possibly claim a given load of feed as being free of residues and thus cannot make an RWA claim.
- As mentioned before, the same rule would apply for other claims such as ractopamine free and animal product/by-product free.

In essence, any feed mill that is producing “RWA, Animal Product Free” feed would be unable to have antibiotics, animal products or animal by-products within their facility. That means all premixes in a warehouse would have to use compliant vitamins, there could be no animal fats or blended fats on-site, no fishmeal, etc.

At this point the CFIA proposal is not open for comment. The next step for CFIA is to put these policies into “Gazette 1”, meaning it will be translated from draft form, to the proposed final document. The feed and entire pork industry can comment on the Gazette 1 version. It is assumed that Gazette 1 will be written and shared in 2017. Following this comment period, the legislation will be put into Gazette 2, and will become law.

If this passes through as it is currently written, it is likely that only smaller feed mills in the country could abide by, or would choose to adopt, new RWA rules. Furthermore, the question becomes, where would this process stop? For example, would CFIA demand a dedicated RWA feed trucking fleet? Would dedicated RWA pig processing plants be required? This would also affect RWA chicken and beef production, so there are ramifications there as well. These changes would be sure to hurt the efficiency of the Canadian feed milling and premix manufacturing industries. The changes could require significant investment in facilities in order to be compliant.

The obvious fear is that there will be market share lost as traditional RWA (or any “claim” product for that matter) costs would escalate, and even fewer producers would have the interest or ability to produce such products.

CFIA’s assertion is that purchasers have a reasonable expectation that food products containing the label claim, "Raised without the use of antibiotics", would be free of antibiotics and their residues. Those feedmills and industry partners that produce the product now however, know that current protocols ensure that this is already the case. The marketers of those meat products should have the ability to represent their customers and say whether or not they are comfortable with the current level of scrutiny provided by 3rd party auditors along with the status quo monitoring by the CFIA.

Existing protocols and verification are based on scientific evidence of testing by independent world-class laboratories throughout Canada. The CFIA's pending actions has the potential to cast aspersions on a number of long standing professional industries like feed mills, independent laboratories, animal producers, grocers, and the list goes on.

Undoubtedly, this would have an impact on Canadian competitiveness in these “niche” markets and would have an impact on the processors and retailers involved, as well as the mills and producers. Now for mills and the rest of the industry, including packers and retailers, there will need to be significant time spent trying to explain to CFIA the ramifications of these initiatives. It will be necessary for the entire chain to do so in order to try and minimize the potential negative affects to all producers, mills, on farm feed manufacturers, etc. The focus will be to demonstrate why these new rules are an unnecessary overreach and what the cost of this potential legislation could be for the industry.

Those that are most familiar with current practices are certain that the proposed ruling is without technical merit. It is a clear case of overreach and regulating where there is no demonstrated concern or need.

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February 2017

*A version of this report first appeared in Canadian Pork Market Review. For a free two month trial of the CPMR, please email [Kevin@KevinGrier.com](mailto:Kevin@KevinGrier.com)*