

Suspect adverse reactions to veterinary vaccines
A what-to-do list for producers

- Consider other possible causes for problems that occur shortly after vaccination. Many suspect adverse reactions are due to bad luck, such as outbreaks of spontaneous disease, or poor injection technique (contaminated needles; giving two incompatible vaccines into the same site). Companies are naturally skeptical that their product was at fault and are experienced in deflecting weak or spurious claims. Be prepared to gather enough scientific information to establish that a vaccine may have been responsible.
- Have your local veterinary laboratory test sick or dead animals, by necropsy when necessary, so that the basis for the problem can be established to the satisfaction of all. Reputable veterinary vaccine companies pay for laboratory testing.
- All necropsies should be done at a laboratory. Veterinary practitioners are not equipped to do forensic-type examinations or to follow chain-of-custody rules. A detailed, properly recorded necropsy is essential when losses are substantial and legal action is contemplated. Consider submitting a severely affected, live animal for necropsy if the problem is considerable.
- Keep a detailed, separately dated, hand-written diary of what happened to animals, costs for treatment and deaths, and notes of all conversations you have with concerned parties.
- Involve your veterinarian in documenting the problem.
- Record how product was given, when, by whom, and *exact* sites of administration.
- Lodge adverse a suspect adverse reaction (SAR) report with the USDA's Center for Veterinary Biologics in Ames, IA (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/cvb/>). Write down main points of the conversation, including name of the person to whom you spoke. Ask the CVB whether it has previous reports of adverse reactions for this product in general, and the serial you used (number on vial) in particular. Your complaint will be kept on file by CVB and may be of value later on.
- Notify company and product retailer of the problem immediately. Write down main points of the conversation(s), including verbal agreements and understandings. Ask if they have a record of adverse reactions associated with this product.
- If product you used is still available, particularly if you have unused vials, label it appropriately and have it tested at a laboratory. Some tests (e.g., endotoxin concentrations; viral contamination) are tricky, so ensure they go to a laboratory that has experience in doing them.
- Take still photographs or videos of sick and dead animals.
- If the company offers to settle out-of-court, do not inflate estimates of your losses. Companies know what wrecks cost. Settlements are driven in large part by a company's wish to maintain its reputation and goodwill in the area, and to stay out of the newspapers. They are willing to cover most reasonable costs – but not to be taken to the cleaners!

Donal O'Toole
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