



STANDARD & RULES

The Product Standard and Rules of the Northern Ireland
Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme

(APRIL 2018)

A.9b AFBI GUIDANCE - USE OF PHENYLBUTAZONE (BUTE) IF HORSES ARE PRESENT ON FARM

Background

Phenylbutazone (Bute) is a highly effective treatment for inflammation and pain that can be injected intravenously or given orally as a powder or paste to horses. **It is not authorised for use in any animal, including horses, destined for the human food chain.** Despite this, official statistics provided by the European Food Safety Authority show that around 0.1% of cattle tested in the European Union in 2014 had detectable Bute residues.

Farmers are urged to take extreme care when using the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug Bute to treat horses. Investigative work carried out by scientists at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) has shown the risks of inadvertently contaminating cattle through the use of Bute.

Horses treated with Bute must not enter the food chain, and their passports must be signed to declare that the animal is not intended for human consumption. This is an irreversible decision. It is possible that cattle may not be illegally treated with Bute but residues may arise through contamination as a result of the legal treatment of horses on farm.

Control of Cross-Contamination

Studies undertaken by AFBI, using Bute in its powder form have shown there may be cross-contamination of illegal residues in cattle arising through the use of:

- A shared bucket (i.e. if a horse was to be fed from a bucket containing Bute and then the same bucket used to feed cattle)
- A shared pen
- Through contaminated pasture (manure spread and cattle allowed to graze)

Given that Bute is often the drug of choice for horses and that many farmers do keep some horses, it is important that those using the drug take extreme care to avoid contamination of their cattle/sheep.

In order to reduce the risk of such cross-contamination incidents, research by AFBI has indicated that food-producing animals should be:

- Kept away from any vessels used to administer Bute to horses
- Kept away from the treated horses themselves for at least two weeks
- Kept away from housing used during or after treatment (until thoroughly cleaned)
- Kept away from pasture that was previously occupied by treated animals.

Further studies are required to determine the time period over which a pasture may remain sufficiently contaminated to provide a detectable residue of the drug in a grazing animal.

(Source: Investigation into sources of contamination of cattle with Phenylbutazone - Terence L. Fodey, Wesley G. Smyth, Paul Barnes, Imelda M. Traynor, D. Glenn Kennedy and Steven R. H. Crooks. Veterinary Record published online November 5, 2014.

Investigation of the role of environmental contamination in the occurrence of residues of the veterinary drug Phenylbutazone in cattle - Barnes P, Fodey, T. L., Smyth, W.G. & Crooks, S.R.H. *Food Additives and Contaminants Part A*, **34**(4), 520-524 (2017).

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FQAS Standard: Phenylbutazone cross-contamination risks

2.16 New Code	If horses are present on farm, suitable controls have been put in place to control the potential risks of cross-contamination of Phenylbutazone (Bute) to cattle/sheep.	<p>Appendix A.9b – AFBI Guidance - Use of Phenylbutazone if horses are present on farm provides information on how to control the risk of cross-contamination if both horses and cattle/sheep are on farm.</p> <p>Phenylbutazone (Bute) is an unauthorised substance in cattle/sheep.</p> <p><i>The inspector will ask you to sign Appendix A.9b to indicate that it has been read, understood and that the risks of cross-contamination from Phenylbutazone have been acknowledged.</i></p> <p><i>If horses are present on farm and are treated with Phenylbutazone this must be recorded within the Veterinary Medicine Record.</i></p>
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