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NEWS RELEASE

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FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR NEW VEAL CATTLE RESEARCH PROJECT

VFO Partnering with University of Guelph on meloxicam depletion study

GUELPH, ON– Veal Farmers of Ontario (VFO) is pleased to announce the recent approval of funding for a new research project that will see the organization partner with the University of Guelph on a study related to safe use of a pain relief and anti-inflammatory medication with dairy calves for grain-fed veal production.

This study of the use of meloxicam will receive funding through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership) under the Animal Health-Applied Research, Pilot Projects and Demonstrations project category. Meloxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is approved for use as an anti-inflammatory, antipyretic and analgesic (pain relief) in cattle in Canada and marketed as Metacam™ by Boehringer Ingelheim.

“Our government is committed to the continued advancement of animal welfare across the country,” said Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. “Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, we are investing in important scientific research to enhance livestock care and maintain the highest standards in food safety.”

“We want to ensure the best care for our animals. This project will give us insight into managing their health needs and minimizing risks to food safety. Through the Partnership, our government is pleased to support such important research to benefit animal welfare,” said Ernie Hardeman, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Currently, meloxicam’s product label carries a warning “not to use in veal calves” as a withdrawal interval (i.e. time after last treatment with drug before the animal may be safely processed for food) has not been established in pre-ruminating calves. Therefore, the use of meloxicam in veal cattle is considered “extra label.”

The primary goal of the project is to establish a withdrawal interval for veal cattle based on the Health Canada’s approved Maximum Residue Limits (MRL; maximum allowable concentrations of drug in edible products of animals that will ensure human food safety). Currently, there is no data evaluating the depletion of meloxicam in grain-fed veal cattle because the market is a relatively small market compared to other commodities like dairy or beef cattle.

Leading the project will be Dr. Ron Johnston, Associate Professor, Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology, co-director of the Canadian Global Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (CgFARAD) and Dr. Dave Renaud, Associate Professor. The results of this research will be communicated through CgFARAD enabling veterinarians wanting to prescribe meloxicam with current up to date research supporting the meat withdrawal recommendation.

The investment is too great for pharmaceutical companies to make in the drug approval process for veal cattle so as an industry it's important for us to commit resources to initiatives like this. This data could then be used by industry to better align with food safety and calf health and welfare protocols.

"This is a positive and proactive initiative for grain-fed veal producers. Our industry is changing with respect to antimicrobials and VFO wants to support our producers by working on these types of projects," stated VFO Chair Tom Kroesbergen.

VFO, through the Canadian Veal Association (CVA) has been working collaboratively with Health Canada on updating product labels that state "do not use in calves to be processed for veal as a withdrawal period has not been established for pre-ruminating calves" or "do not use in calves to be processed for veal." Through this work, there remain a number of outstanding products that have been prioritized and will be further evaluated. VFO and CVA have prioritized meloxicam as the first priority as it aligns with VFO's commitment of improving animal welfare.

"This project is a key strategic objective for VFO because we want to provide the industry (veterinarians and producers) with the right tools to avoid positive residue violations when using products like meloxicam extra label," added Kendra Keels, VFO's Industry Development Director.

VFO is a producer-run organization that represents the interests of Ontario's veal producers. VFO is committed to promoting industry growth and viability through collaboration, innovation, marketing and education. To learn more, visit ontarioveal.on.ca.

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This project was funded in part through the the Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

The Agricultural Adaptation Council administers cost-share funding to sector organizations and collaborations in Ontario on behalf of the Province and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

