VACCINE STORAGE HEALTHCHECK

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#DISEASENOTONMYFARM

Vaccination is an important part of protecting your animals from infectious disease. To be effective, it is essential vaccines are transported, stored, and administered correctly. If you answer ‘no’, ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ to any of the questions below, these are areas where you can improve your vaccine storage.

### COLLECTING VACCINES FROM THE PRACTICE/STORE

**QUESTION 1** | ALWAYS | OFTEN | RARELY | NEVER
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
**DO YOU OR YOUR VET TRANSPORT VACCINES TO THE FARM IN A COOL BOX, COOL BAG OR SIMILAR?**

Vaccines should be stored between 2 and 8 degrees at all times. They can be destroyed by freezing and become ineffective if too warm (above 8 degrees). Coolbags and coolboxes are insulated but not temperature controlled, so having ice packs inside helps to maintain the optimum temperature for as long as possible. Wrapping the ice packs in bubble wrap, a tea towel or similar helps to prevent direct contact and the vaccine from freezing.

**QUESTION 2** | ALWAYS | OFTEN | RARELY | NEVER
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
**WHEN COLLECTING VACCINES, DO YOU RETURN IMMEDIATELY TO THE FARM AND PUT THEM IN THE FARM FRIDGE?**

The longer the vaccines are away from a working fridge the more likely they are to become damaged by incorrect temperature. A cool box or bag will only help short term so it is best to return to the farm immediately after collecting your vaccines. Another option is to ask your vet to bring the vaccines to the farm on the planned day of administration.

**QUESTION 3** | ALWAYS | OFTEN | RARELY | NEVER
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
**DO YOU RECEIVE ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED ON THE STORAGE AND HANDLING OF VACCINES FROM YOUR PRACTICE OR STORE?**

Your vet, practice or store should offer advice on vaccine storage. Please ask if you’d like more help.

### STORING VACCINES ON THE FARM

**QUESTION 4** | YES | NO
--- | --- | ---
**DO YOU HAVE A DEDICATED FRIDGE USED SOLELY TO STORE VACCINES AND OTHER FARM MEDICINES?**

Ideally, a pharmaceutical fridge should be used for medicine storage as the air inside is circulated by a fan providing a uniform temperature and a rapid reduction in temperature after the door has been opened. This helps to regain the optimal temperature as quickly as possible. If a standard domestic fridge is used, avoid using an old kitchen fridge. The farm fridge should be bought for the purpose or in optimum condition and serviced regularly. When choosing a farm fridge, avoid those with freezer compartments, as they can cause cold spots within the fridge increasing the risk of freezing vaccines. Also avoid using the farm fridge for other items such as food to reduce temperature fluctuations caused by the door being open and shut.

**QUESTION 5** | YES | NO
--- | --- | ---
**IS THE FRIDGE HOUSED INSIDE RATHER THAN OUTSIDE OR IN A SHED?**

If the temperature surrounding a fridge moves outside its climate rating/class specified by the manufacturer, it may stop working. If it is in an outside building it may not work correctly. All fridges should have a climate class printed on their rating plate (or instruction book) telling you the upper and lower temperature limits. Fridges work by dispersing heat from their condensers, so there should be enough space around the fridge to allow air to circulate. Ideally, have a separate power supply for your farm fridge so temperature control is maintained at all times, even during a power cut.
**QUESTION 6**

**DO YOU STORE YOUR VACCINES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FRIDGE?**

The middle of the fridge holds the most constant temperature. The top, bottom and back of the fridge can be prone to freezing and the fridge door tends to be too warm. Store vaccines in the middle of the fridge, and avoid putting them at the back where ice can form. If a fridge is overloaded the air cannot circulate properly and the temperature is likely to be less consistent, so try to keep the fridge at a maximum of 50% full. A build up of ice in the fridge will reduce its efficiency and prevent it from functioning properly. Defrost and clean it regularly.

**QUESTION 7**

**HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHECK THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR FARM FRIDGE?**

Vaccines are vulnerable to any temperature fluctuations, so it’s important to check the temperature of your fridge every day. If the fridge temperature is outside the 2 to 8 degree range, your vaccines may have been damaged. Contact your vet for advice.

**QUESTION 8**

**DOES THE FRIDGE CONTAIN A MAXIMUM/MINIMUM THERMOMETER OR A DATA LOGGER?**

An internal fridge thermometer only gives the fridge temperature at that moment in time. A max-min thermometer records the highest and lowest temperature the fridge has been within a given time frame (e.g. the last 12 hours). This indicates if any temperature breaches have occurred and gives an ‘at-a-glance’ analysis of the fridge’s performance. A data logger takes a temperature reading on a regular basis (e.g. every 30 minutes) so not only records any breaches in temperature but also the duration of each breach. This is the most accurate way to measure fridge temperature over time. It’s recommended data is downloaded and analysed at least weekly. Less often increases the risk of using a damaged vaccine. If vaccines have been stored at an incorrect temperature, call your prescriber for advice and consider servicing or replacing the fridge.

**USING VACCINES**

**QUESTION 9**

**DO YOU CHECK THE VACCINE EXPIRY DATE AND ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE USE?**

Vaccines are fragile and lose potency over time. Vaccines used past the sell-by date are likely to be ineffective. Some vaccines need to be brought to room temperature just before being administered. Check the datasheet or pack insert for instructions.

**ACTION PLAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHCHECK GAP</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>BY WHO</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.G. QUESTION 8</td>
<td>PURCHASE A DATA LOGGER, DOWNLOAD DATA</td>
<td>FRED</td>
<td>WEEKLY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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