

# UNL Extension: Acreage Insights

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### Good Management Practices for Livestock Injections

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Image from Wikipedia Commons

Livestock are injected with a variety of animal health products; vaccines, bacterins, antibiotics, anthelmintics, analgesics, and vitamins. Giving injections properly improves animal welfare and product response. Although the purpose of an injection is to benefit the animal, if proper technique is not used an injection has the potential to do harm. Poorly injected products may not be well absorbed and may not work. The injection could create drug residues, scar tissue, and or abscesses that could cause the animal pain and suffering

If your animal requires medication, it is important to read and follow all label directions or instructions from your veterinarian. The label will tell you where and how to give the product. For example, the label will say whether an injection should be given intramuscular (in the muscle, IM) or subcutaneously (under the skin, SQ). If a product is labeled for both IM and SQ, the SQ route is preferred. The label also may recommend the proper needle length.

Before giving any injection, read the drug label on the bottle. Follow the recommended method of drug storage, drug handling procedures, expiration date, and precautions. It is a good practice to check the label before you draw the medication out of the bottle and again before you inject

the drug into the animal. Check the drug name to ensure it is the one recommended by your veterinarian.

Before injections can be administered, adequate restraint of the animal must be achieved. Every effort should be made to keep the animal as still as possible while the injection is given. This helps to prevent broken needles as well as harm to the animal or to the person giving the injection.

If your animal requires an injection, the proper injection site is in the neck for pigs, sheep, and cattle, in front of the shoulder. The IM injection is the most commonly used in the horse. The site of the IM injection is important for the safety of the horse and the handler. Choose a large muscle mass that is actively used by the horse. Consult your veterinarian for the correct area of muscle to use for horses.

Always use a clean syringe and a clean, sharp needle. Dull or worn needles cause tissue damage to the muscle. If a needle becomes bent or broken never straighten it and continue to use it. If the integrity of your syringe or needle has been compromised, the injection site could become severely infected and cause additional problems for your animal.

The size and length of the needle depends on the medication and the method of delivery. Choose the smallest needle size (diameter) that is reasonable to use for the product type and volume to be injected. This will minimize tissue damage and reduce leakage of the product from the injection site. Choose needles of the correct length for the type of injection you are giving, and suitable for the size of animal. Shorter needles can be used for subcutaneous injections; longer ones for intramuscular injections. Small animals have smaller muscle masses and should be injected with needles of appropriate length to prevent injury to nerves and other tissues. Your veterinarian can advise you on selecting the proper needle size and length.

If a needle breaks, it is very important to make sure that none of the broken needle remains in your animal. A broken needle left in an animal is a significant concern. Consult your veterinarian, if you need help in removing a broken needle.

It is very good practice to record the date of the injection, the medication used, the type of treatment, the location of the injection, the amount of medicine injected, the withdrawal date, the name or identification number of the animal and any comments/observations.

Finally, dispose of your disposable needles and disposable syringes in a medical waste container.

For more information check out the following publications:

[Good Management Practices for Youth Injections](#), University of Nebraska- Lincoln Extension NebGuide G2159

[How to Give Your Horse an Intramuscular Injection](#), Alabama Cooperative Extension ANR-1018

[Injection Site Management](#), University of Arkansas Research and Extension FSA 3109

[Giving Medication to Animals By Injection](#), Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs AGDEX 400/20