



Antibiotic Fail – Justification

DP.5 - All antibiotic milk test fails must be reported to the nominated vet within 1 week of the farmer being made aware and evidenced to Red Tractor

DP.5.a - The failure is recorded in the complaints record

DP.5.b - The industry investigation form is completed and signed by the vet within 28 days; includes recommendations to prevent the issue happening again

DP.5.c - If there are two or more antibiotic fails within a 18-month rolling period, approved medicine training is undertaken by relevant persons

Justification

As well as its importance to animal health and welfare, the responsible use of veterinary medicines is essential for maintaining food safety, protecting consumer confidence and demonstrating effective stewardship across the dairy sector.

Milk producers are responsible for ensuring that milk from animals receiving antibiotic treatment, or within the relevant withdrawal period, does not enter the food chain. Antibiotic residue testing provides an important additional control for identifying failures where they occur, minimising risk to producers, processors, customers and the dairy industry's reputation.

The rate of repeated failure is still too high, and this needs to be addressed. Completion of the industry antibiotic residue investigation process following every residue failure helps to identify the root cause of the incident and implement corrective actions to prevent reoccurrence. Investigations can highlight weaknesses in medicine management, such as failures to observe withdrawal periods, inaccurate treatment records, ineffective communication between staff, or shortcomings in animal identification and segregation procedures. Involving the nominated vet in the first instance provides an important opportunity to review medicine use and management protocols, identify the likely cause of the failure, and make recommendations to reduce the risk of recurrence. A consistent industry approach ensures that lessons are captured and that appropriate actions are taken following every failure.

While a single residue failure may arise from an isolated error, repeated failures may indicate a greater risk that underlying medicine management systems are not operating effectively. Requiring farms with two or more residue failures within an 18-month period to undertake medicines training provides targeted support to address potential knowledge gaps and improve the competence of those responsible for administering and managing veterinary medicines.



The requirement reinforces the principles of responsible medicine use and continuous improvement by focusing attention on prevention rather than enforcement alone. By combining structured investigation with additional training where repeat failures occur, the standard helps reduce the likelihood of future residue incidents, supports compliance with legal and supply chain expectations, and strengthens confidence that milk entering the food chain is safe and produced under robust medicine management practices. It also promotes accountability at farm level and demonstrates the sector's commitment to food safety, responsible veterinary medicine use and maintaining confidence in UK dairy production.

References

Food Standards Agency (FSA) (2018) *Information and guidance on the testing of milk for antibiotic residues*. London: Food Standards Agency. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/milk-hygiene-and-antibiotic-residues/information-and-guidance-on-the-testing-of-milk-for-antibiotic-residues>

Food Standards Agency (FSA) (2024) *Milk hygiene and antibiotic residue controls*. Available from the Food Standards Agency. [Milk hygiene and antibiotic residues - GOV.UK](#)

Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) (2024) *Responsible use of veterinary medicines and withdrawal periods*. Available from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. [Veterinary medicines legislation - GOV.UK](#)

Red Tractor Assurance (2026) *Industry antibiotic residue investigation process and corrective action requirements*. [Industry-Milk-Test-Investigation-Form.docx](#)