

# Discard expired vaccines

by Willie Botha, national sales manager, Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP)

**Farmers should not use vaccines past their expiry date, but rather destroy them. Expired vaccines do not work anymore. It is important to give the correct amount of the vaccine to the animal. This is so that the animal can build antibodies against the disease. Automatic syringes must therefore be correctly calibrated before use.**

Farmers should pay strict attention to hygiene. Equipment such as syringes and needles must be properly cleaned before and after use. It is good to boil it in water for 10-15 minutes before use. Store vaccines at 4-8°C, as is shown on the packaging. If you do not store it at the right temperature, the vaccine will not work anymore.

When you buy a product from the OBP, it will include a product leaflet that gives information on:

- How to use the product
- How to store the vaccine
- The side-effects the vaccine may have on the animal
- How much and the way you must give the vaccine to the animal

It is very important to know which diseases may occur on your farm. This is so that you can plan your yearly vaccine programme for your herd. It is also important to know that you can only use the vaccine for the type of animal it has been made for. You cannot use a cow vaccine on a sheep, for example.

You must remember that vaccines should be used to prevent diseases. Vaccines will not help if your animal is already sick. It takes time for the animal's body to build up the antibodies against a disease. If the animal is already sick, the antibodies will not be strong enough to fight the disease, and the animal will stay sick, or even die.

The vaccines that you can buy from the OBP are of a very good quality, and it is very affordable and safe to use. You can vaccinate a sheep for as little as R3 against pulpy kidney, blue tongue and pasteurella. This will protect the animal for a year.

Farmers often buy a vaccine, place it in the glove compartment of their bakkie, and then drive around in the sun for hours. If the vaccine is exposed to such heat, it will not work properly anymore, if at all. Vaccines should always be placed in a cooler bag with icepacks and immediately taken to the farm, where they should be refrigerated at the correct temperature. Liquid vaccines must never be frozen. Once a freeze-dried vaccine has been mixed with the liquid, they must be kept cool and given to the animal within an hour or two. Leftovers must not be stored for future use, but must be thrown away.

Farmers should only buy vaccines when they are ready to use them. They should also buy the vaccines directly from their cooperatives, where the vaccines are kept in a refrigerator. Some farmers decide what disease their animal have, without asking a vet. This might cause them to see the wrong disease, and vaccinate for the wrong disease. Farmers are advised to make use of their local veterinarian to give them the right advice and suggest the right product to use.

For information or advice, contact Willie Botha or Dr Jakes Modumo at 012 522 1500. **UM**