Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Hemp and hemp-based products used as agricultural compounds: Animal feeds and animal treatment products

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Recent media comments that it is legal to use unprocessed harvested hemp, or hemp products such as baleage or silage, as an animal feed in New Zealand are incorrect.

Hemp or hemp products used as animal feed are regulated under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Act 1997, and are classed as agricultural compounds. It is an offence against the ACVM Act to import, manufacture, sell or use any agricultural compound that is not authorised (either registered as a trade name product or exempt from registration subject to compliance with the conditions of exemption). There are currently no hemp or hemp products for animal feed registered as trade name products, and the exemption status of these products has not been confirmed at this time.

Tetrahydrocannabinols, the chemicals in hemp which include THC, cannabidiol (CBD), and related compounds, and any preparation or plant containing them, are classed by the Ministry of Health as controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975. Under the ACVM Act, controlled drugs and anything containing them must only be given to or fed to animals after registration under the ACVM Act. When products are registered, MPI applies strict controls and conditions of sale and use.

Hemp-based nutritional products for animals, such as hemp protein powders, could be considered exempt from registration if they have no detectable tetrahydrocannabinols (including THC and CBD) and meet all other the requirements for exemption status under the ACVM Act and regulations. (If a product is determined as exempt from registration, the exemption applies only if the controls and conditions are adhered to.)

Feeding unprocessed, harvested hemp to animals without registration is not permitted under the ACVM Act and may also be an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act. (Misuse of Drugs Act offences are a matter for the Police.)

Feed products made from processed hemp, like hemp protein powders, can only legally be fed to, or used on, animals if it can be proved that there are no detectable tetrahydrocannabinols and they meet the requirements for an exemption from registration.

Unprocessed or minimally processed hemp products, like hemp crops used for grazing, baleage, or silage will contain tetrahydrocannabinols and therefore cannot be used as animal feed at all.

Hemp-based products intended for animal use with actions that rely on the presence of CBD, such as skin care products, shampoos, and calming or behavioural management products, are not permitted to be imported, manufactured, sold, or used in New Zealand unless registered under the ACVM Act.

For more information on the use of hemp and hemp products as animal feeds, please contact MPI at approvals@mpi.govt.nz.

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