

ACVM Alert Notification 26-001

Industrial hemp and hemp-derived substances use in agricultural compounds

(Supersedes ACVM Alert Notification 22-001)

As the industrial hemp industry continues to expand in New Zealand, there is also a growing interest in using industrial hemp and hemp-derived substances such as hemp oil and hemp seed in animal feed and other substances classed as agricultural compounds. Recent changes by the Ministry of Health to allow industrial hemp cultivation without a licence from 28 May 2026 under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977 will support this growth. While the licence has gone, there will be a requirement for growers to notify New Zealand Police and the Ministry for Primary Industries before growing.

The changes being implemented under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations do not affect the regulatory requirements for hemp under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Act. This means products containing hemp or hemp-derived substances still require registration before they can be used in animals. This includes animal feeds such as grazing forage, silage, hay intended for food-producing animals, as well as pet food, and pet treats intended for companion animals.

To ensure farmers, growers, and owners have a clear understanding of the regulatory requirements for these products, New Zealand Food Safety is confirming how animal feeds and other veterinary products containing industrial hemp and hemp-derived substances are classed under the ACVM Act.

Key points

- All agricultural compounds containing industrial hemp and hemp-derived substances must be registered under the ACVM Act before they can be legally imported, manufactured, sold, or used. This includes animal feeds such as grazing, pet food, and treats, and non-feeds such as shampoos, topical products, and supplements. This **will not change** with the removal of cultivation licencing under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations.
- In addition to the requirements under the ACVM Act, there are still other requirements under Ministry of Health legislation to be aware of and complied with when industrial hemp is grown or used.

Authorisation under the ACVM Act can take the form of either registration as a trade name product, or exemption from registration by way of compliance with the ACVM Regulations. It is an offence to import, manufacture, sell or use any agricultural compound that is not authorised by either registration or exemption.

Animal feeds, pet foods, and treats are typically classed as oral nutritional compounds exempt from registration under the ACVM Regulations provided they:

- a) meet the description of oral nutritional compounds; and
- b) conform to the requirements for exemption from registration in the ACVM Regulations; and
- c) meet the conditions of exemption applicable to oral nutritional compounds.

When an oral nutritional compound (Schedule 2 entry 22 of the ACVM Regulations) also contains industrial hemp or hemp-derived substances, it is classed as a combination of both an oral nutritional compound and an oral preparation prepared from a plant, part of a plant, or an unrefined extract of a plant (Schedule 2 entry 13 of the ACVM Regulations). For a combination product containing industrial hemp, the conditions of exemption for a plant preparation cannot be met because cannabis is a substance prohibited by countries importing New Zealand primary produce (see para (f) of the conditions applying to Schedule 2 entry 13 of the ACVM Regulations). This means that products containing hemp or hemp-derived substances are not eligible for exemption and must be registered under the ACVM Act before they can be imported, manufactured, sold, or used in any species in New Zealand.

Other agricultural compound products containing industrial hemp or hemp-derived substances that are not feeds will also be subject to the same dual-status and requirements to comply with the conditions of exemption of entry 13. This includes other types of oral and topical preparations for animals that would be considered exempt from registration if hemp or hemp substances were not present. Hemp extracts such as CBD, with or without THC, making therapeutic claims, like managing behavioural problems such as anxiety or treating pain and distress, also require registration as veterinary medicines and are not eligible for exemption under any Schedule 2 category.

A person looking to import, manufacture, sell, or use products containing THC and/or CBD must comply with Ministry of Health administered legislation including the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975, the Misuse of Drugs (Industrial Hemp) Regulations 2006, the Medicines Act 1981, and the Medicines Regulations 1984. Although the licensing provisions have been removed, there are still regulatory controls on THC content and the status of CBD products as medicines that dictate how hemp and hemp-derived substances may be used under these pieces of legislation. It is important to be aware of this, as some regulatory restrictions in place under the Ministry of Health legislation will also apply to products intended for use on animals.

For more information on the registration of agricultural compounds containing industrial hemp and hemp-derived substances, or any other questions about these products, please contact New Zealand Food Safety at approvals@mpi.govt.nz.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. The Ministry of Health no longer require growers to hold a licence to cultivate industrial hemp. Does that mean I can use hemp as animal feed now?

No. The Ministry of Health's licencing requirements were set to ensure compliance with the Misuse of Drugs Regulations, but how processing and manufacture of those crops into other products are subject to the same regulation as they were before the amendment to those regulations. The regulatory requirements under the ACVM Act for registration of products from hemp crops intended for use in animals, including feed production, grazing, or production of other veterinary products, are unchanged.

2. Would my hemp and/or CBD product be eligible for exemption from registration if I can prove it is THC-free?

From an ACVM perspective, the requirement that an exempt plant-based product must not contain substances prohibited by our trading partners always applies. Because some trading partners class hemp as a whole as a prohibited substance, the presence or absence of THC is not the critical factor.

3. Why is it legal for humans to eat hemp seeds but illegal/prohibited for animals to eat hemp?

Human foods and animal feeds are regulated separately, with each being subject to different regulatory controls. The Food Act, which regulates food for human consumption, acknowledges that hemp seeds can be considered a food. The Food Act does not apply to animal feeds.

4. Is it true that hemp is prohibited for use in animals?

No. Veterinary medicines and animal feeds can be made from hemp or include hemp-derived substances like hemp oil or hemp seed, but the presence of hemp means they must be registered under the ACVM Act before they can be legally made for and used in animals.

5. Can I use human hemp or CBD products on my pets, or feed human-food hemp seed to them?

No, not without veterinary authorisation and oversight. Use or feeding of products made from hemp to an animal makes that product a veterinary medicine subject to the controls and restrictions under the ACVM Act. Veterinary oversight is required to make sure that the use of hemp products or CBD in pets is safe, and to be able to administer treatment if something goes wrong. Administering or feeding hemp to an animal without veterinary authorisation and oversight could put that animal in danger and may be considered a breach of the ACVM Act by MPI.

6. Can my vet prescribe or authorise use of a human hemp or CBD product to treat my pet?

Yes. Veterinarians can use human medicines including controlled drugs to treat an animal under their direct care if they feel there is a therapeutic need to do so. The vet must then manage all the risks to that animal's welfare as part of their treatment plan.

Veterinarians can also request MPI approval to import a hemp or CBD product for the treatment of their patient if there is not a suitable veterinary or human medicine available in New Zealand. More information about this type of approval, called approval in special circumstances, can be found here:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/processing/agricultural-compounds-and-vet-medicines/veterinary-medicines/getting-a-veterinary-medicine-authorised/authorisation-of-veterinary-medicines-under-special-circumstances/>.

This type of approval is only issued to veterinarians looking to treat their own patients and cannot be granted directly to owners.

Please note that under the Veterinarian's Act and the veterinarians' Code of Professional Conduct, all vets have an obligation to choose to import and/or use a human medicine for animal treatment only if there is no suitable alternative veterinary treatment available. This is known as following the veterinary medicine authorisation "cascade."
