

Feed Supplements vs Veterinary Medicines

Understanding Regulatory Positioning, Claims and Industry Practices

Not Every Animal Health Product is a Medicine.

Inside this issue

- What is a feed supplement and what is a veterinary medicine?
- Key differences in purpose, claims, labels and usage recommendations
- Examples of preferred claims that qualify product under feed supplement category
- Common practices that may inadvertently trigger drug classification
- Industry best practices for manufacturers, marketers, distributors and field teams



Why This Matters?

Industry context

- The animal health market is expanding, and product categories are becoming more diverse.
- Manufacturers and marketers need clear positioning to avoid confusion between nutritional products and medicines.
- Wrong claims can create compliance risk, affect brand reputation and mislead farmers or channel partners.
- Correct identity supports discussions around licensing, tax/GST classification, packaging and market communication.
- A common industry language helps strengthen the identity of the feed supplement segment.

Why this is important for members

- Manufacturers can design labels and promotional material more responsibly.
- Marketing and field teams can avoid disease-treatment promises.
- Distributors and dealers can explain products more accurately.
- Regulatory and technical teams can build a stronger internal claim review process.



The core distinction

Feed supplements support nutrition, productivity and normal physiological functions.

Veterinary medicines are intended for diagnosis, treatment, mitigation, cure, control or prevention of disease.

A product may be formulated as a feed supplement; however, if its label, brochure, website, social media creative or field communication suggests disease treatment or disease prevention, it may invite scrutiny as a medicinal product.

This makes the intended use and the claim language extremely important.

**Key message: Feed supplements support nutrition and performance.
Veterinary medicines address disease conditions.**

In *Godrej Agrovet Ltd. v. FSSAI & Anr.* [Neutral Citation: 2026:DHC:2861-DB], delivered on 07.04.2026, the Delhi High Court held that the FSSAI could not regulate animal/cattle feed under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which is focused on food for human consumption. The Court also set aside FSSAI directions that sought to make BIS certification mandatory for commercial cattle feed, observing that mandatory BIS requirements must flow through the proper authority and legal route. This update reinforces the need for clear product identity, appropriate jurisdiction and careful compliance review.



Key Differences Between Feed Supplements and Veterinary Medicines

The difference is not decided only by physical form. Powders, oral liquids, boluses, drenches, tablet like oral preparations or other dosage may be understood differently depending on composition, label, claims, intended use and promotion.

Parameter	Feed Supplement	Veterinary Medicine
Primary purpose	Nutritional support, maintenance of normal health, productivity and performance	Diagnosis, treatment, mitigation, cure, control or prevention of disease.
Product positioning	Part of feeding, nutritional management or productivity support.	Part of disease management or therapeutic intervention.
Typical claims	Supports growth, immunity, gut health, feed efficiency, mineral balance, productivity or general well-being.	Treats, cures, controls, prevents or manages a specific disease, infection or disorder.
Usage pattern	Often given regularly through feed, water or direct oral supplementation as per feeding recommendation.	Usually given for a disease condition, treatment period or veterinary indication.
Label wording	Supportive and nutritional language.	Therapeutic, medicinal or disease-specific language.
Composition positioning	Nutrients, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, probiotics, enzymes, botanicals or functional nutritional ingredients.	Active pharmaceutical ingredients, vaccines, antibiotics, antiparasitics, anti-inflammatory drugs or other medicinal substances.
Regulatory orientation	Feed/product and packaged commodity compliance, depending on product type and applicable law.	Drugs and Cosmetics Act/Rules and veterinary medicinal product requirements, depending on product type and intended use.
Prescription requirement	Generally not required, subject to product type and local requirements.	May be required depending on drug category and applicable rules.
Main risk area	Over-claiming or using disease language in labels and promotions.	Non-compliance with drug approval, licence, label, prescription or withdrawal requirements.

Dosage Form Clarification

Boluses, oral liquids, drenches, powders and other oral preparations are not automatically veterinary medicines. Classification depends on the total product profile: ingredients, intended use, label wording, claims, directions for use, promotional material and regulatory context.

Simple test: Is the product being presented as nutrition support or disease treatment? Disease treatment, cure, control or prevention language increases medicinal classification risk.

Claims that are Generally Safer Vs Sensitive for Regulatory Aspect

In practical market situations, claim language is often the biggest source of confusion. A correctly formulated feed supplement can still be exposed to regulatory risk if its label, leaflet, website, social media post or field-force communication makes therapeutic promises.

Feed supplement claims

- Supports growth and development
- Helps maintain normal immunity
- Supports gut health and digestive balance
- Helps improve feed efficiency
- Supports productivity and performance
- Helps maintain mineral balance
- Supports rumen function
- Helps maintain normal body condition
- Supports recovery from nutritional stress
- Helps maintain general health and well-being

Use only when truthful, relevant to composition and supported by scientific rationale.

Claims with potential regulatory sensitivity

- Treats mastitis
- Prevents coccidiosis
- Cures diarrhoea
- Controls bacterial infections
- Eliminates E. coli or Salmonella infection
- Prevents respiratory disease
- Treats liver disorder
- Controls fever
- Replaces antibiotics
- Works as an anti-inflammatory treatment

Avoid unless the product is appropriately approved, licensed and positioned as a veterinary medicine.

Examples of Better Claim Positioning



- Supports gut health and digestive balance
- Supports udder health through nutritional support
- Supports reproductive performance through nutritional supplementation
- Supports normal immunity and general health
- Supports bone, hoof and mineral balance
- Supports nutritional management and animal performance



- Cures diarrhoea
- Prevents mastitis
- Treats infertility
- Controls respiratory infection
- Prevents lameness
- Replaces antibiotics

Important

Better wording does not make a claim automatically compliant. The claim must be truthful, substantiated, relevant to the composition and reviewed by the technical/regulatory team.

What May Attract Drug Classification and Industry Best Practices

Common red flags

- Claiming to treat, cure, mitigate, control or prevent a disease.
- Mentioning specific disease names as the target use.
- Using therapeutic terms such as antibiotic, antiviral, anti-inflammatory or anti-infective without regulatory basis.
- Giving disease-specific dosage instructions or treatment schedules.
- Presenting the product as an alternative or replacement for a veterinary drug.
- Using case studies or testimonials that imply cure or disease control.
- Using medical-style visuals such as injections, hospital imagery or disease-treatment graphics for a feed supplement.
- Promoting usage after diagnosis of a disease rather than as nutritional support.
- Missing clear feed supplement identity and suitable declarations.

Industry best practices

- Define the product identity before launch: feed supplement, feed additive, nutritional supplement or veterinary medicine.
- Use supportive language focused on nutrition, productivity, performance and normal physiological function.
- Maintain an internal claim approval matrix with approved and prohibited claims for every product.
- Train field teams so that verbal and written communication remains consistent with the label.
- Review labels before printing through technical, regulatory, legal and marketing teams.
- Keep scientific substantiation ready for every important claim.
- Coordinate product development, regulatory, marketing, sales and packaging teams early in the launch process.
- Use clear declarations where appropriate: “For animal feeding use only,” “Not for human use,” “Not for medicinal or therapeutic use,” and “Not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, mitigate or prevent any disease.”

GST / HSN Perspective

Product positioning can also influence commercial and tax-classification discussions. In general, feed supplements may fall under a 0% GST position, while veterinary medicines may attract 5 % GST, subject to the correct HSN classification and the product's composition, essential character, intended use, label, claims, trade understanding and relevant tariff entries. Disease-treatment claims or medicinal presentation may therefore create issues beyond feed-supplement positioning. Companies should align technical, regulatory, finance and tax teams before finalizing claims, invoices, catalogues and market communication.

Conclusion: Clear positioning protects the industry

Feed supplements and veterinary medicines both have important roles in animal health. Feed supplements support nutrition, productivity and general well-being, while veterinary medicines address disease diagnosis, treatment, mitigation, cure, control or prevention. Responsible positioning protects industry credibility, farmers' trust and animal health.

Final Message

Clear positioning protects both industry credibility and animal health.

Annexure

Suggested Declarations and Source Notes

Suggested declarations for feed supplement labels

- For animal feeding use only.
- Not for human use.
- Not for medicinal or therapeutic use.
- This product is intended for nutritional support and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, mitigate or prevent any disease.
- Use as per recommended feeding guidelines or as advised by qualified professionals.

Source notes for internal review

- NUTRITIMES Volume 01: importance, categories, composition and forms of feed supplements.
- NUTRITIMES Volume 02: feed supplement identity, label skeleton, Legal Metrology label declarations, recommended declarations and industry best practices.
- Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940: relevance of "drug" definition where disease diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention is implied.
- Godrej Agrovet Ltd. v. FSSAI & Anr., Delhi High Court, Neutral Citation 2026:DHC:2861-DB, judgment delivered on 07.04.2026: FSSAI jurisdiction and BIS certification discussion for animal/cattle feed.
- GST/HSN Note: classification should be reviewed product-wise by qualified tax advisors based on composition, essential character, label, claims and applicable tariff entries.

Disclaimer

This draft is intended for general industry awareness and educational purposes. Product classification may depend on composition, claims, intended use, label, promotional material, tax position and applicable regulatory requirements. Companies should seek product-specific regulatory, legal and tax advice before finalizing labels, claims or commercial positioning.

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