

2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show

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When to Call the Vet

Your veterinarian can be a valuable asset to your beef herd.

by **Mathew Elliott**

NASHVILLE, TENN. (Jan. 31, 2007) — Veterinarian Arn Anderson compares being a veterinarian to being a firefighter. When you have a problem, they show up, he told Cattlemen's College® attendees.

That being said, he gave several examples of when it's not good to alert your vet — like when the cow is still loose in the pasture, when you have no intention of paying the veterinary bill, or when the cow is simply not yours. However, for those times when it is necessary, Anderson gave some suggestions.

Anderson advised producers to first establish a relationship with their veterinarian. Know if the situation at hand is an emergency or if it's something that you might be able to work out with some effort. Also, understand your strengths and weaknesses in a situation so you know when it's time to call.

After establishing those factors, use sight, smell, sound and touch to determine the severity of the situation. If you determine that it is worthy of a veterinarian's assistance, the next step is to identify and capture or corral the animal.

The most common veterinary calls include reproductive issues (dystocia or prolapse), respiratory problems (breathing difficulty), and factors involving the gastrointestinal (GI) tract (bloat, diarrhea, drooling, etc.).

There are also times when you should not delay in calling a veterinarian, Anderson said. For example, if multiple cattle are having respiratory problems, abortions, skin problems or multiple deaths. Any combination of those ailments would be reason to call your veterinarian early and

often. In a worst-case scenario, government officials might have to be called in to deal with a potential illness spread.

Get a plan

Veterinarian Glenn Rogers, manager of cow-calf beef veterinary operations for Pfizer Animal Health, suggested producers meet with their veterinarian to establish a herd health plan. A herd health program looks at the health goals of an organization's operations, providing a tangible document that summarizes health activities on an annual basis, Rogers said.

Rogers also noted that health programs are important as a planning tool, to improve communication, as an education tool, to improve efficiency, to avoid product complications, or to decrease some costs. He said health programs are often the first step in a preventive partnership with your veterinarian.

To set up a health plan, Rogers suggests nine simple steps:

1. Work with a cattle-oriented veterinarian.
2. Determine the optimal time of year for calving/breeding.
3. Determine the approximate length of the calving/breeding seasons.
4. Be knowledgeable about the diseases/parasites in your area.
5. Determine the best time to administer preventive practices.
6. Select products that have research-proven efficiency and the best data.
7. Determine which package will "package" health for you.

"By having health programs and looking beyond vaccinations, you can hopefully prevent problems. Then if you do have problems, you know how to fix things specifically for your ranch."

— Arn Anderson

8. Put all of this on one page, and display it for everyone involved to see.

9. Provide periodic updates as needed.

Anderson concluded the session by expressing the importance of practicing prevention for profit. "By having health programs and looking beyond vaccinations, you can hopefully prevent problems," Anderson said. "Then if you do have problems, you know how to fix things specifically for your ranch."

Anderson and Rogers presented their comments Jan. 31 during the Cattlemen's College® session "PR203: Your Vet — A Valuable Asset" at the 2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and NCBA Trade Show in Nashville. The Cattlemen's College is sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health. The proceedings to these presentations are posted to the www.4cattlemen.com newsroom. Audio files will be available within two weeks of the conference.



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