

Consulting through crisis

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Abstract

Veterinarians play a vital role in the VCPR for many reasons, but during times of true crisis when so many variables are outside of any one person's control, we often are leaned on heavily. This is not a skill we are necessarily equipped with in our formal training. This presentation will focus on addressing these situations beyond our control that impact the well-being of our livestock and those responsible for their care, while also giving insight into protecting the overall health of the entire industry by connecting with consumers who may have concerns about certain crisis in animal agriculture that they may be exposed to by the media.

Key words: crisis communication, agriculture, mental health, resources

Examples of crisis

The clear definition of crisis in a feedlot, cow-calf or dairy operation is not always precise. A lot of things that affect or trigger crisis can come from disease outbreaks, natural disasters, market fluctuations, regulatory changes or personnel challenges. The impact of crisis should be considered on the animal's well-being, the caretaker's well-being and the owner's well-being.

Consulting prior to crisis

Preparedness plans for both animal and human aspects of commonly observed or known crises is an easy tool to implement on farm. The level of difficulty is raised when the industry or individual farms did not even have awareness of the crisis at hand in order to be prepared.

Consulting during crisis

Balancing the needs of the client at hand and the broader industry during crises can be the most difficult hurdle for the veterinarian to consider. Addressing the decision-making processes in terms of great uncertainty is something that we are well-equipped to advise on. Advocating for the well-being of both animals and humans is within our scope of practice.

Financial resources

Being cognizant of financial resources for our clients during times of crisis can be a major benefit. Providing guidance through insurance claims, helping assess damages and reporting for the Farm Service Agency, if indemnities exist, and communicating some of the intricacies of the industry to people who may not understand them can all help financially relieve stress for our clients.

Mental health resources

There are mental health resources locally available to your clients that are potentially agriculturally aware. This can and will help save lives. Spread awareness of these resources before you find your clients in a place of crisis.

Conclusion

This presentation underscores the need for veterinarians to potentially provide key support to farm personnel during times of crisis. By recognizing and addressing the interconnectedness of animals and humans, veterinarians can contribute significantly to the mental well-being of the people they serve.

