

What We Expect from a Veterinarian*

FAY CRUSCH
Bainville, Montana

Dr. L. Mac Cropsey, Presiding

Introduction

Our speaker this noon is a cattleman. He was ranch-born and raised and owns an operation of 4500 acres near Bainville, Montana. He began ranching in 1940. He has an extremely well managed registered and commercial Angus operation and has been doing herd performance testing work and research since 1959. He has also had experience as a farm news reporter for a 12-station network in the Northwest for ten years and television experience for eight years. So, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Fay Crusch. (Applause)

MR. FAY CRUSCH: Thank you, Dr. Cropsey, distinguished officials of your Association, distinguished guests; good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It is a tremendous honor and pleasure for my wife and me to be invited to participate in this wonderful program of yours. I am very glad to be here. I guess I could illustrate it best by my favorite story which I have sort of worn out through the years! It is the story of the so-called village "smart aleck" that we had back in the pioneer days in my great state of Montana. Every village, I guess, had one! He was a young man that always wore the six-shooter strap to his side, and he had a particular fascination for making people dance by shooting at their feet. On a particular occasion a crowd had gathered out in front of the general store. The young man was standing at the edge of the crowd when an old prospector came up the street leading his pack mule. When he got even with the crowd the young fellow stepped out and said, "Old man, can you dance;" The old fellow said, "No, sir, I can't." He said, "Well, you are going to anyway!" Whereupon he reeled his six-shooter and began to shoot at the poor old fellow's feet. The poor old guy just put on the best kind of jig he could. When the six-shooter was empty he simply stuck it back in the holster and worked his way back to the edge of the crowd. Slowly the old prospector turned on his heel, walked back to his pack mule, and pulled out an old shot Buffalo gun. He pointed it right straight at the young fellow, let him look it over for about a minute—it had a muzzle about an eighth in diameter—and finally he said, "Young man, have you ever kissed a mule?" And the young fellow replied, "No, sir, but you know, I've always wanted to!" (Laughter) So that sort of fits me and my wife today—we have always wanted to come to a grand gathering like this. I can assure you that I have had the surprise of my life being here because I frankly thought that some of your program would be pretty technical, some of it was, of

*Address presented during the noon luncheon, Wednesday, December 15, 1972.

necessity of course, but most of it has really been down to earth, and as a cattleman, I've received a great deal from it.

It is also nice that you invited us because, can you believe it, my veterinarian is here today, and he will be shocked at some of the things I am going to tell him! He will be even more shocked when he gets home and gets the bill from me for the advice that I am going to give him today! (Laughter)

You delivered me a wonderful topic "What We Expect from a Veterinarian"—as a cattleman. I want to assure you today, first of all, that I am a Western rancher, and as such maybe a little bit different from the average cattleman from the United States. I don't think there is such a thing as an "average cattleman" or an "average rancher." I know human nature well enough to know that you fellows are not going to believe everything I say, or take to heart everything I say, but I suppose that the average of you will accept some of it, depending on your viewpoint. This reminds me of a story of the two fellows who rode along the road one evening in a Cadillac and saw an old rancher who was semi-retired and walked out because he didn't care to ride the horse anymore. He was looking at his cows. They stopped alongside the old rancher and said, "Would you like to take a ride?" He said, "No, I am just looking at my cows." They said, "We are too; get in." He climbed in the back seat. As they were riding along, he kept watching the cattle, and the two fellows thought they would have some fun with him. Finally one of them said, "Boy, have we got a smart dog at our house. My wife never goes grocery shopping, she just gives the grocery list and money to the dog and he goes down and brings back the groceries—never breaks an egg—never busts a ketchup bottle—always has the right change." They had a good laugh about that wonderful dog and the old rancher never said a word. After a while the other one said, "You've got a smart dog, but we've got a smarter one at our house. When I smoke Camels my dog watches my supply upon the shelf, and when it gets low he goes down and brings me back some from the store. If I get a bad cold, he switches to Kools. On Sunday he always brings me my favorite cigar." They had a good laugh about him. The rancher never said a word—he just looked out the window. They went along for awhile and finally curiosity got the best of them and one of them turned around and said, "Have you got a dog?" He said, "No, I don't have a dog, but my brother has a dog, and he is smarter than either one of your dogs." They had a good laugh, for no dog could be smarter than theirs! The old rancher never said a word, no argument, they just rode along. Finally the fellows couldn't stand it any longer and one of them turned around and said, "Okay, buddy, what does your brother's dog do?" The old rancher said, "Oh, not very much. He just runs the store where your dogs do their trading!" (Laughter)

Now, let me first tell you fellows what I do not want from a veterinarian. I do not want you to come out and doctor my sick animals. Are you shocked? I can hear some of you saying, "Well, I went to school for years and spent thousands of dollars to get an education to do that very thing." I know you did, but I'll tell you **what I want you to do**. I want you to give me a health program so that my animals won't be sick, so you won't have to doctor them. I know on occasion that they will get sick, but a health program is worth a thousand times more than doctoring the sick animal. I do not know whether you learned much on this health program in veterinary school or not, because I do not know very much about the curriculum of veterinary schools. I want you to know something about nutrition so you can come

and consult with me on this health program and on the general production picture on my ranch. As a rancher, I don't really sell beef; I sell grass. Every supplement that is added to it is merely to supplement and add to the selling of the product of that grass. I also want you to know something about performance testing because the cowman that is on the move, and the cowman that is following the trend of the times, the cowman that is really interested in producing the kind of products that the people, the packer, and the retail outlet want, will have to know more about his cattle than the man who just runs cattle. That is a favorite expression of mine—the one who just fills up his range with cattle and tries to keep them alive from year to year, and doesn't particularly care what kind of calf he produces, just wants calves. I want to measure my wealth in terms of pounds of beef sold. And, I need the help of my veterinarian on performance testing.

I want to know where I am going and performance testing can tell me. It is like the Irishman who came to America to view the wonders of our good land. He saw our towering mountains, our beautiful cities—that was before smog I guess—and he saw our rolling fields of wheat and our wonderful herds of cattle. One day, of all places, he found himself in a graveyard, reading the inscriptions on the tombstones. Finally he came to one with these words:

*“Pause here my friends and cast an eye;
As you now are, so once was I.
As I now am, soon you will be,
So prepare to die and to follow me.”*

The Irishman gazed at it for awhile and scratched his head. Finally he took a pencil out of his pocket and beneath the inscription he wrote these words:

*“To follow you, I am not content
Until I learn which way you went.”*

(Laughter)

I think you, as a veterinarian, ought to know something about range management. We are really in the range livestock business in America to sell grass. Now, I don't expect you to be an expert in this field. When we talk about the word “management” the first three letters of that word are “m-a-n,” and that spells man. I don't need to remind you that you are men the same as we cattlemen. So we want you as partners in this story of range management. I want my veterinarian to be a part of a consulting team. I want him to sit down with me and talk about my ranges and whether they are producing at a maximum or not.

I want to buy top vaccines. When I walk into my veterinarian's office and I ask for something in a bottle, I want it to have quality written all over that box and that bottle. This is the decision, you see, that you have to make as veterinarians. We ranchers are not capable of it, either by training or knowledge, so we have to depend upon your judgment. You are educated for this, and we are willing to pay you for this.

That reminds me of a story of two fellows who hadn't seen each other in a long time. One said to the other, “How are you doing, Bill?” “Oh,” he said, “not so bad; since I saw you last I got married.” The other one said, “That's good.” “No,” he said, “not so good. I married a real mean woman.” “That's too bad.” “No,” he said, “not so bad; she had a million dollars.” “That's good.” “No,” he said, “not so good; she wouldn't give me any of her money.” “That's too bad.” “No,” he said,

“not so bad; she did build us a \$100,000 home.” “That’s good.” “No,” he said, “that’s not so good; last night it burned down.” “That’s too bad.” “No,” he said, “she was in it.” (Laughter)

Now I am going to get down to where you live. I want you to have clean grounds, green grass, a yard and a spotless medical clinic. I think there is something psychological about we cattlemen, who are continually fighting, as you are, the problem of disease and health in our herd, wanting to drive in and find your premises spotless. When we find an operating room where you work on these cattle, we want it, as far as humanly possible, to be spotless. I repeat, there is something psychological about that. I suppose the animal won’t know the difference, but your client is not the animal! Your clients are the ranchers. So I expect that from my veterinarian.

I expect promptness. I know you have problems. I sympathize with you. I had a friend who was engaged in public relations for many years, and he was an expert at it. He had an old saying that went, “If you really want to get things loused up, get people in on it.” I want you to think about that for a minute. I don’t say that in a derogatory fashion at all. What I am trying to say is that your time is not really your own, but as far as possible, I want you to be prompt.

If I run into a problem, and most ranchers do, at three o’clock in the morning, and the road is open, and I call my veterinarian (right here I want to stop for a minute and say to you that I don’t call him too often, unless I feel it is really necessary. I haul the animals in and I go to see him as often as I can, and I think as a cattleman I owe him that) and tell him what I need, when he hangs up that phone, he better be on his way because I expect to pay him for it, and I would not call him if I did not need him! I know how cattlemen feel about this. As far as humanly possible, you have made a commitment to do that by your training, I think.

I am glad you wives, especially you young wives of veterinarians, are here today. I suppose, like the wife of a medical doctor, you are going to object to him leaving your home at that hour of the morning, or being gone at night, but may I just take this privilege of advising you that when you married that guy, you married him for better or for worse. I have news for you, sometimes it has to get worse before it gets better! I sympathize with you, and I want you to know that. I think this sympathy has to be a two-way street. I want to make that very plain today. The cattleman who does not have sympathy and understanding for his veterinarian and his family is lacking something in his education, too. I am guessing that you moved into a new location for practice after your education, and you probably went head over heels into debt to build that clinic, then your wife wanted a nice home like all the other ladies in the community, and she is entitled to it, so you bought a new home right on the outskirts of your income, and so you are saddled with debt. I expect to pay you for all of this, and I want to add here that cattlemen who do not expect to pay their veterinarian, and do it promptly, for services rendered, in my humble opinion as a cattleman, do not deserve your services, but you would probably give it to them anyway. You are that kind of people.

Yes, I want something else. I want you to write a newsletter to us cattlemen. I know that you are not all literary artists, or geniuses, but you don’t have to be. This is something cattlemen have come to expect. One of your best avenues of

education—of selling all of these things that I have been talking about, including health programs, your vaccination programs, and all of the rest of it—in this newsletter.

I have to say today that my veterinarian is a genius at this. I bought them all, and I have them all on file. His letters are literary gems. I want to pick out three or four little sentences this guy says. He gets his message across. This one is dated May. He said, “Warm and dry. It is too bad the spring was so short. I suppose many missed it. I know I did. I was up late the night before and slept through half the spring, and by afternoon it was gone!” Now I have to explain to you why we say that up north on the Missouri River in Montana, right on the Canadian Border. This is right up close to the Arctic Circle, you know, and we only have two seasons, winter and July! Sometimes July comes on Sunday, and we don’t even take advantage of it! (Laughter) Then he goes on to say, “Are you a big gambler, or are you going to vaccinate your cows and heifers for vibriosis?” Research has shown that annual revaccination for at least four years results in a higher calving percentage, cows breed quicker, first or second heat rather than third and fourth, as we have learned at this convention. We get many pounds of extra calf by early calving.

He says, and this one is dated December, “Sometimes I don’t think anyone reads this letter.” He was down in the dumps that day. He says, “But I keep trying on the same old subjects: Vaccination must be done no later than eight months for interstate shipment, and no later than ten months if they will remain in Montana. Vaccinate now, the weather isn’t going to get any better!” I can bear out that last phrase—it doesn’t in December in Montana, usually. Here’s another one dated January: “Are you prepared for calving? Are your cows receiving enough Vitamin A and phosphorus? Are they strong, gaining weight and getting plenty of exercise? If not, now is the time to correct the situation.” Then this one from February: “It’s a good time to make arrangements for calving those cows. Why not be ready for a change? A few things done ahead of time change bad days and nights into better times; why don’t you fix up a calving pen in the barn?” I like this one because, oh my goodness! how many cattlemen need this, “fix a place,” he says, “to run the cows with calving problems in, so you can work in lighted, sheltered, dry surroundings.” He could have added that some heat is imperative, too, and you would be surprised at how much better things go when the cow is confined. You are not freezing and you have some light! “If you want to know what kind of a setup is best, stop in and I will show you how to fix a simple, inexpensive workable pen that is made to order for calving.” You don’t have to be a literary artist, but if you want a personal relationship with your rancher friend and client, write some kind of a newsletter. He will appreciate it so much.

Then, finally, we want you to keep us informed, and we just don’t want to miss the best techniques, just plain advice is what we want, and we want someone to go in and talk to occasionally. You may charge us for this indirectly, and I don’t mind if my veterinarian does. I would have said that I would like to prop my feet up on his table, but I said awhile ago that his place ought to be spotless, and if I put my rancher’s boots on his table, it wouldn’t be spotless, but at least I like to relax and talk to him. What cowman doesn’t? This is part of your responsibility.

I hope you will accept these suggestions for what they are. These may be

good or they may be bad. Like the two fellows who met and were talking about a mutual friend who had had an accident in an airplane. One said, "What happened, Jake?" The other one said, "Well, he was up and the motor konked out!" He said "That was too bad." "No," he said, "not so bad; he had a parachute." He said, "That's good." He said, "Not so good; the parachute wouldn't open." "That was too bad." He said, "No, not so bad; there was a haystack right under where he was falling." The fellow said, "That was good!" He said, "No, not so good; there was a pitchfork sticking up in the haystack." He said, "That was too bad!" He said, "No, it wasn't so bad; he missed the pitchfork." The fellow heaved a big sigh of relief, and said, "That was good." He said, "No, not so good; he missed the haystack!" (Laughter)

You know, I sometimes think that if there are failures in the beef cattle industry in America, particularly insofar as health affects production, that it is the failure, the mutual failure, of us ranchers and you veterinarians because our work, our endeavor, and our enterprise are tied so closely together. Your responsibility, like mine, is two-fold in this field. You have the responsibility to the cowman, to agriculture, and rural America, and then you have a responsibility to yourself, your family, and your nation.

I like to tell this story to illustrate what I mean. It is Christmastime. You know the Bible says that my Savior and yours walked the shore of Galilee and spent a great deal of time during those three years of his ministry in Jerusalem. The Pharisees, the Jews of that time who wanted to maintain the status quo, were always setting a trap for him. On this particular occasion in question they were sure that they had him cornered because Jerusalem was falling to the Roman soldiers because it was under the yoke of the Roman rule and the Jew hated the Roman soldier. And somebody asked my Savior this question: "To whom shall they pay tribute—to God or to Caesar?" They were sure they had him because if he said to God, the Jews could be down on him, and if he said to Caesar, then, or rather if he said to God, the Roman Legions would be down on him, and if he said to Caesar, then the Jews would be down on him, but he didn't give them an answer immediately. He asked for a coin. When he got it, he held it up, and said, "Whose inscription appears on this coin?" They said, "Caesar." And echoing down the corridors of time for nineteen hundred years, to you and I comes his answer today, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's." It is Christmastime. They didn't trap him then. And he is the bulwark of our strength today, but the point of my story is today, and I hope I didn't offend you with that story, no matter what your religious views. The point of the story is that the responsibility of man is always at least three-fold, to his God, to his fellow man, and to his nation. The last frontier of America today is out on the plains and the prairies and the plowed fields, rural areas of America, and the chief users of that wonderful environment are the cattlemen of America who have been blessed with more and finer feed and grass than any other nation in the history of the world, for the finest in beef production. So, your responsibility joins mine. It is exactly diametrically opposite to what is happening across much of America, where people want to flock out to the rural areas because their water is no longer fit to drink, and the air is unfit to breathe, and ours, by the same token, is still fairly pure and clear. Our water and our air is fresh and pure and fit to breathe, and we want to keep it

that way. No one provides the health-giving qualities like the fresh, wholesome food in America today or the health-giving qualities and body-building virtues of fresh wholesome beef that is produced off this land.

I want you as a partner in producing this fresh, wholesome beef, and I want you as a partner in keeping those streams and those wells clean and pure and that air crystal clear. Won't you join me? You have been a wonderful audience. Thank you very much. (Applause)