

“Communisulting”

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The title of my talk is “Communisulting,” which is nothing more than a combination of two words: “communicating” and “consulting.” Communication is most vital and one of the key factors in my consulting practice. To become an effective consultant, I must be able to communicate not only with the managers, assistant managers and the feedyard personnel such as the cattle boss, pen riders, and processing crews. As Dr. Reddick said, the cowboy boss can make a veterinarian look real good and you need to communicate with him in every way possible. I also must communicate with the office personnel because these are the people who keep the records for me—the key processing records, in-coming cattle records, the hospital reports, and the death loss records. These people know when I am coming and they have them all up to date and all I have to do when I get to the yard is get these records out and start looking at them. In working with these people in the yard, after examining the records, we go out to the yard either with the assistant manager or the cowboy boss; we examine each pen with new cattle, the problem pens and we examine all the hospitals. We discuss any specific problem that may be happening and prescribe accordingly. Most of the feedyards keep individual records of the hospital cases. We examine these records and go over any changes that need to be made. If there are any questions we make changes in the medication or we may take some cultures and send them to the diagnostic laboratory. At this time, if there are any other animals that have to be examined closer, we also take samples and send them to the diagnostic laboratory. Gaining the confidence of these people is very important and the only way to do this is to become totally involved and in order to do so, I hold “bull sessions” with these people at each feedyard as often as possible—sometimes once a week, sometimes once a month but we hold them as the need arises. We also hold a planned program every six to eight weeks and a night meeting. These night meetings will have a guest speaker (or sometimes I am the guest speaker) who gives a talk on a specific problem and we have a question and

answer session after an hour or hour-and-a-half presentation. These are very good. We have a cocktail hour and we have more than one yard there, usually four or five feedyards. These people are in competition with each other but yet they are always looking for a new way to handle these in-coming cattle, so they do communicate with each other. The feedyard pays for this dinner and cocktail hour and my only expense is putting these things together! Educating the feedyard personnel is very important because by educating them I not only gain their confidence but also open a line of communication. An educated client is the best client. We send a lot of articles out. I have one feedyard manager who, when he gets tired of me sending him articles, reads a different article and then sends me a copy to make sure I read it! This way we get a better line of communication going. I also try to meet with the nutritionists, feed mill manager and feedlot manager as often as possible. This is one of the most important but yet it is one of the most difficult meetings, because I am not always there at the same time as the nutritionist. The biggest majority of the feedyards will call me and let me know when the nutritionist is coming so we do try to get together. The nutritionist and the veterinarian must work closely together because of the related diseases and the problems that arise, especially to new cattle. Since we have several drug companies in our area, we must have an open line of communication. We try not to sell drugs, we let these people do it; the feedyards have more confidence in us in making decisions for them and what drug to use and not use. These people would normally, and I stress normally, not leave products there that we do not prescribe. But yet, if there is a question, the feedyard manager or even some of the drug company salesmen will call me and we will discuss the product and see if they can leave it or not. The feedyard manager appreciates this open line of communication because he knows that he cannot keep up with all the different products that are on the market today. It is like Dr. Mackey said earlier: if you are going to become a consultant, get out of the drug business. This is what we are trying to do.