

# Consulting in Feedlot and Exotic Animal Medicine

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A while back I had a client who I believe came from Texas. He called me about a bull in his herd which had been through a traumatic experience. The bull had half of his ear missing. I told him how to treat it and he is about 120 miles from me so I did not want to make the trip for this one individual. About three days later he told me his colt, Fida, was in pretty bad shape with a large abscession on his side. He was worth \$7,000 or \$8,000 and I thought I had better get there and take a look at him and the "guy that he got in the fight with." This man had to be from Texas. Who else would have an elephant running with cows? The exotic animal practice really started as a hobby for me and 95% of my practice is feedlot. I own my own feedlot and my own commercial herd. I guess if anything, I get a psychological boost out of my exotic animal practice. I go back to the feedlot with new vigor. You read about this in the January 15 issue of the AVMA Journal. We had the first case of rabies in a chimpanzee. We also had two human transmissions and, if you want to go through a period like that, that is enough to shake you up for a while and it feels good to go back on a feedlot where nobody is biting you! Every now and then you will go out and when you have to necropsy an elephant you do not mind necropsy examination of feedlots any more. Your attitude certainly changes! Not too long ago, I was called to a feedlot in Florida by a veterinarian in general practice. They had already suffered a death loss of 15% in a lot of 40,000 head. It has gone up since then.

While we were on the lot, I heard a lot of noise and thought there must be a group of veterinary students out there! They were a bunch of Florida cowboys about 17 or 18 years old and somebody gave them a horse and rope and told them they were "cowboys." Instead of getting his sick cows where he treated his sick steers in the pens, two or three Florida cowboys would get in there and chase them with a rope and treat them. Conservatively, I think he lost 50% of his animals treating them. I thought about this and realized we do two things in exotic animal practice. It sometimes makes more sense than what we do in our

cow practice. In all the places I go to, I would say we treat 90% of the animals with capture guns. If this made sense there, I could not see why it would not make sense in those feedlots. If we would treat them right in their own pens, without having to move or stress them, with very little stress on their pen mates, maybe we would get increased livability. Also, in the Southeast, we are in a labor crisis. I know in my own feedlot there was a time when I did not treat all my animals because literally all my hands were in the fields and I did not have anyone to help me. I could not get an animal up so I would let them be and, more often than not, it would be worse by the next day and when I did get ready to treat him, it was a dead animal! Well, I talked with the client in this lot and mentioned that we should get some capture guns. We were very successful and have 100,00 head of cattle in different lots. We were all using them and all of us are happier. We think we have found something that makes our lives a little easier. The guns are available. One is a power gun and the other one is fired by CO<sub>2</sub>. I started out with a CO<sub>2</sub> gun and we have gone away from it because of two or three disadvantages. The first one is that you have to be able to count to 10 because you only get about 10 shots from the CO<sub>2</sub> and some of us cannot get that high. I have vaccinated a lot of rocks and trees. The powder gun has problems in cold weather when gas contracts. You try and shoot this outside here in Wisconsin today and it will not get out of the barrel. For consistency, I prefer the powder gun. It does not make any more noise and it seems to do us a lot more good. I use 1½ inch needles in the feedlots. In order to get the rubber plunger to work it must be greased and lubricated. There is a silicone lubricant available, but you can use vaseline which is a lot cheaper. The charge fits into the end of the plunger. With CO<sub>2</sub> guns, the dart goes in the barrel with the bolt right behind it. With the powder gun, you break it just like you would any shot gun. It is a 30 gauge gun, you put the dart in and there are various sizes of propellants. The blank that I use is very low and will work on any size syringe and it is best for feedlot use.