

# Programmed Practice Within a Company - Dairy Feedlot, and Cow-Calf

**Baxter Black, D.V.M.**  
*Grand View, Idaho*

I am from Idaho and I know that some of you know where it is. We refer to it as God's country but this last week I think God went to Miami. I work for one company and it is a big outfit scattered between western Nevada and, mostly, in southern Idaho. It goes into the northern end of Utah and it has feedlots, cow-calf dairy range, sheep, dogs and working horses. Our total on-feed cattle in three feedyards amounts to about 75,000 to 90,000, depending on the season. We have 10,000 mother cows and they are on about seven ranches. We have just started in the dairy business, so I am learning a lot! We are milking 310 now and have about 100 replacement heifers. We are going out of the sheep business because this does not pay any more and we have about 15,000 range ewes left. We run about 200 working horses (by that I mean horses we ride and use to move our cattle). I usually do not know from one day to the next what I will be doing for a living.

In the feedlot, each of the yards amounts to about 30,000 cattle. We feed all kinds of cattle, 400 lb. weaners and we have growing cattle that we buy at about 500 lbs. and then, what we call finished cattle, numbering 700 or more. I am involved with the whole business and set up the vaccination program and processing procedures. We keep computerized death loss records and computerized feed records. It is a business and that is what you have to accept. You can approach anybody in the cattle industry. They are not concerned with how you look and what you wear, they are concerned with money and that is what you have to keep in mind if you want to approach somebody. I think we all know this but these people know it before you do and you have it brought to your attention rather than the other way around. I am not a nutritionist by any means, but in my business, you become one in a hurry—a kind of a backyard nutritionist! We employ a consulting nutritionist who lives in Arizona and I do all his footwork, more or less. He gives me the percent and then I insure that what he designs is what we feed. You do not look at a feedlot from the standpoint of handling a sick cow; we look at it from the standpoint of handling healthy cows.

That is where 99% of the investment is. In our cow-calf operation we pregnancy test all the cows, semen test the bulls and design vaccination and feeding programs. There is another area that needs a lot of work done, namely, cattle can get along on a lot less feed. The figures are all there—all you have to do is put them into practice. The number of cows that we have replacing these is difficult if you just have a 10% cull every year for old age, infirmities, acts of God, etc. You have to replace about 10% of them and if you have 10,000 cows, that is about 1,000 cattle. You either go out and buy them or you do what we tried last year, and I think it is going to work. We took about 2,800 heifers out of the feedyard which weighed about 6½ cwts and put them with the bull for 30 days. We pregnancy tested them in the summer and took only the bred heifers and calved them out in the winter, in about 30 days. I could see I was getting in pretty deep so I called Washington State College of Veterinary Medicine since I thought this would be a pretty good preceptorship program. They were obliging and it worked very well. We had three or four senior students in January and February, and they came down three or four per week over a six week period. They did the obstetrical work and I furnished the labor so they were not watering, hauling hay and that sort of thing but I involved them in the management. I did not pay for the trip down and back. We just let them sleep in the bunkhouse and eat in the cookhouse and they had the tour of the feed yards.

When we bought the dairy, it is amazing that we did not have any disease problems. We had cows in that string that we are just now getting rid of that had been milking for three years—no calf, no cycle, they had been milking them for three years and we spent about three months cleaning the manure out of the free stalls. We found that we had a lot bigger dairy than we thought we did but we are shooting for a big outfit! The owner thinks big and is aiming for 5,000. I cannot even get to 500!

The range sheep operation, for those of you who have never been involved, is fascinating. Out there they have the basic people come out and

they run the sheep on the range. They go back and forth from the summer to the winter range. The men go with them and we brand the calves in the spring. But if you have never been in on a sheep operation, a flock of sheep in the summer amounts to about 1,000 scattered all over. You go out and get two or three big trucks and maybe 20 men and walk out on the range, build a little pen about 10 ft. by 20 ft. and a V out of some posts and snow fence. Then you go out with paper bags and horses and wave them, and run the sheep into this big V. You run about 40 into this little square. Four or five men on the inside pick up these lambs by the hind legs and place them on a panel. One takes his pocket knife and docks the tail and if it is a ram lamb, cuts the tip off the scrotum and pulls the testicles out with his teeth and then he takes the lamb to the next guy who sprays a little KRS on it.

The next man earmarks them and you flip them and put on a paint brand. You turn them out and that is how you get your account. It is a truly fascinating operation. This is the way they have been doing it for the last hundred years and we are going out of the business. The last three years we have lost 5,000 lambs and it is a real problem and I am not necessarily a coyote hater. I think you could kill every coyote on the face of the earth and next Monday you would see one over on the hills! They are just around! Last March, I hired a new graduate who takes care of one of the feedyards, a couple of the ranch operations and the dairy. I also hired a young lady who is a biology graduate and we instituted a laboratory. With every kind of practice you cannot operate without clinical pathology and histopathology—it is essential and we also have our own microbiology laboratory.

---

## Programmed Practice in a Cow-Calf Beef Operation

**Dr. J. B. Schmitt**  
*Consulting Practitioner*  
*Bozeman, Montana*

Since I'm in the dairy capital of the world I must say that many of my clients are using beef-dairy cross cows in their beef operations. Many of these come from this area so the dairy practitioner should have some concern and interest in our program.

One of the species of the world which I do not fortunately deal with is the mighty "turtle." But he does have a peculiarity which is of interest to me in that he "makes progress only when he sticks his neck out." I'm going to stick my neck out today and postulate how I feel the veterinarian in meat animal medicine fits into the agri-business world of the future.

The beef cattle practitioner is many things to his clients. He is a (a) veterinary medical consultant; (b) management consultant which includes breeding program consultation; (c) economics consultant; (d) diagnostician; (e) technician; (f) educator; and (g) friend or enemy—depending on the magnitude of his fees. You can see from this list that the beef cattle practitioner then is primarily a consultant. I like the Veterinary Economics

editorial staff attitude that every veterinarian, no matter what species he practices upon, is first of all a consultant and that is his primary purpose. All else the veterinarian does may be meaningless if he does not act as a consultant.

I've predicted before to many colleagues that most large animal clinics depending on beef cattle practice will be monuments to the beef cattle practitioner in 20 years. The existing medical clinics will become very good surgical facilities or will disappear. The veterinarian that is interested in beef cattle practice in the west that doesn't build his practice around consulting will find himself surrounded by one of these monuments where the overhead will eat him up. I have already seen this happen in my area in Montana.

Because I believe so strongly in this philosophy I established a practice based on the consulting concept. Personal contact led me to clients who were interested in a consulting relationship. There are several reasons why these people were interested in this type of program. These reasons were: