

A Message From The President



It is a challenging time to be a bovine practitioner. . . whether you are in private practice, research or elsewhere. Agriculture is changing, our clients are changing and we are changing too.

Our clients live in a new world - a world in which growth opportunities lie in export markets, and the domestic market is segmenting, aging and demanding more and more information from the supplier. The pressure to drive costs out of, yet add information into, the agri-food chain is enormous.

Some of our clients are thriving in this new environment. And some just want to milk their cows and be left alone. Just like bovine practitioners.

Can you afford to ignore these changes? Perhaps as an individual you can - depending upon your practice, your career and your stage of life. As a profession? NO. Companies that ignore their clients don't stay in business very long.

Our customers are dividing into 2 market segments. Some have what I call "big business" attitudes. They milk cows or run a feedlot because they receive a reasonable return on their investment (ROI). Profitability drives their decision-making.

The other segment is those clients who are in "small business". Non-monetary considerations factor into as many of their decisions as profits and ROI.

These 2 groups have very different veterinary needs. The "big business" operators want a com-

prehensive animal health package that can be linked to their bottom line. They will consider many sources of information and products and they will challenge your recommendations. Veterinary services are expenditures and they're expected to pay off.

The "small business" operators are not as interested in total packages and profitability. Most of them will buy disease control programs and herd health programs. Some won't. But generally these people trust your decisions and rarely challenge your expertise.

Veterinarians' true competitive advantage is our ability to serve both these client groups. We are the only people in the animal health industry that can provide a complete package. Early this century, that package included drugs and services. We've added animal husbandry and management knowledge. As HACCP and other quality programs increase in importance, we are adding another component. . . auditing and certification. There is no other business or industry that can provide all the components of an animal health program. That gives bovine practitioners a tremendous opportunity.



But all clients are not the same and "1-size" does not fit all. The true opportunity lies in determining which clients need which piece of the animal health package; and in delivering those pieces ever more efficiently and effectively. It means listening closely to your clients and finding innovative ways to serve them.

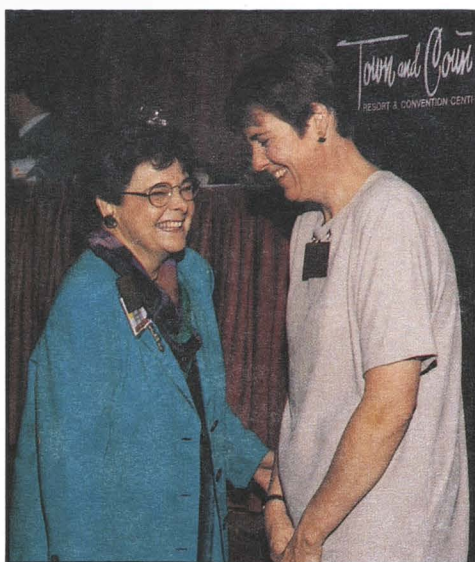
Can the profession adapt to meet the changing needs of our agricultural clients? Yes.

Will we? I believe so. One of the greatest advantages of being on the AABP Board is getting to know so many members. The Board sees the challenges facing you as a professional. We see your

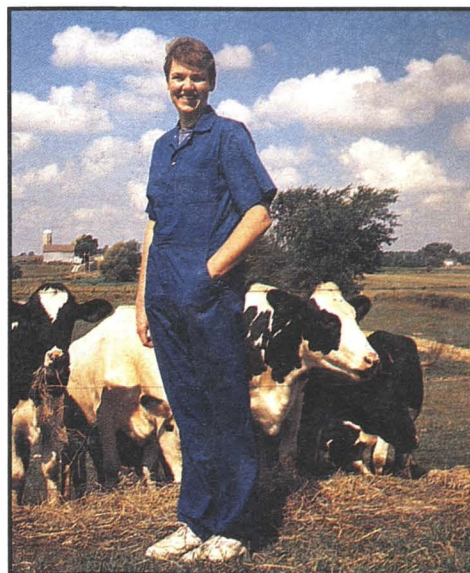
strengths as well. We know your commitment to the profession, to agriculture, and those people you call clients and friends. Despite overall trends, agriculture is going to remain a diverse collection of individual-thinking farmers. . . and unique veterinarians who serve them well.

A final comment: When I was elected to the AABP Executive positions a few years ago, I was both amazed and honored. The experience has been a lifetime highpoint for me, simply because of the people with whom I've been privileged to work. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the AABP leadership. I hope I have made a difference.

*Deborah A. Stark, DVM
President*



President Stark with AVMA President Mary Beth Leininger



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