

Practice Tips

Moderator - Rich Meiring, DVM

Measuring Up While Sorting Things Out

Keith E. Sterner, DVM

2650 Ernest Rd.
Ionia, MI 48846

As practitioners we are often called on to deal with a particular problem animal or disease only to find that it is a symptom of a much larger herd problem. Many times we observe freestalls which are improperly designed with dimensions of neck rails and brisket boards which contribute substantially to the cattle not using them properly. Such conditions can contribute materially to the incidence of lameness and mastitis on the dairy. I have taken to carrying a "Sorting Stix" available from Koehn products Box 577, Watertown, SD 57201 (1-800-658-3998). These fiberglass sticks are vinyl covered and are available in two lengths, 42.5 inches and 54 inches and two diameters, $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{5}{8}$ ". I have marked the longer stick with colored dental tape at two inch intervals starting at 36 inches. This allows me to quickly measure freestall dimensions on herd walkthroughs as well as the ability to determine heifer heights for breeding suitability and to mark feedbunk posts so as to bring heifer size awareness to the dairyman for replacement heifer programs. I also carry blueprints in a small portable filebox in my truck to leave with clients for freestall and restraint facilities designs so there are specific plans that farmers can refer to when remodeling or building. The sorting stick is especially useful in making my arms four feet longer when moving heifers and cows about for palpation. A piece of bright mesh cloth taped on the end helps greatly in turning recalcitrant heifers in the direction desired.

I also use Avery Color Coding Labels with removable adhesive in bright colors to write reminders on dairy calendars for follow up treatments i.e. prostaglandin subsequent to GNRH administration. These are readily available from any office supply store and come in various sizes, shapes and colors. I also affix them to specimen containers so that I remember to submit the sample for testing and then to remind myself to call the results back to the client as well as charge for the

sample. Such a simple device substantially improves client compliance with follow up treatments as well as my own follow up for reporting on test results. The sticker is eventually placed on the dash of my truck and remains there as a reminder until I have reported back to the client.

Jarrett Free Stall

