

# The Implementation Process of Production Medicine Programs

Timothy Jordan, D.V.M.

*Palo Duro Veterinary Services, P.C.  
Canyon, TX 79015*

Even the best thought out and well designed herd health program is destined for failure unless the client can understand and implement the structure of the program. The reasons for failure of implementation are many and the exact causes of misunderstanding are numerous. Many times the blame for failure to achieve positive results is placed on a "communication problem." It should be concluded when the blame is placed on communication that what is really being said is that somewhere along the line there was a failure to talk or a failure to listen or any combination of the two. It can be seen that the reasons for implementation or non-implementation are much more broad than might be thought.

Palo Duro Veterinary Services, P.C. (PDVS) works primarily as consultants with beef cattle clients and has developed a system that was designed to ensure that programs and recommendations are understood and followed. The methods used by PDVS can be viewed as a three step interlocking process: starting, working, and planning.

The starting step is often the most difficult step of the three because it requires background work on the part of the practitioner. This work is in preparation for a production medicine approach to practice. It also requires that the veterinarian identify clients (or potential clients) that would need or desire a comprehensive approach to herd health. One must overcome a certain amount of personal apprehension that this approach will be rejected. A needs assessment of one's client base will allow for identification of the producers that are suited for a more comprehensive program.

In getting started the practitioner must redefine past roles and explore new roles. The production veterinarian is best viewed as a management consultant or as an adjunct manager of animal health and production. With this role comes the added responsibility of problem solver, facilitator, knowledge giver, and communicator. The roles have often been taken by successful consultants without a great deal of forethought.

The second part of the starting step is to approach animal health from a positive perspective. For example, one can approach animal health from a negative—mortality—or from a positive—percent liveability. It is also important to remind the client that least cost is not necessarily the road to maximum profit. Rather, the greatest difference

between total revenue and total cost is the key to maximum profit.

Once the groundwork has been laid, the working step begins. Objective evaluation of the operation plus a clear development of goals and objectives is absolutely necessary. Goals should be developed that focus on both short and long term results. Goal setting forms the initial framework that the veterinarian and client are going to work under. This process also should ensure that a shared commitment is present in the arrangement. A set of goals and objectives should offer guidance and ensure that all parties are pulling in the same direction. This is the first visible step of the implementation process.

These initial steps are used in preparation for the development of the animal health balance sheet. The animal health balance sheet is much like a financial statement employed by financial institutions. The objective evaluator lists the operation's strengths (assets), neutral strengths (contingent liabilities), and non-strengths (liabilities).

Upon completion of the animal health balance sheet the veterinarian must stand back and ask three empirical questions:

1. Do I know what is expected of me?
2. Does my client know what they want from me?
3. Can I deliver the services necessary?

Goal setting and formulation of an animal health balance sheet identifies the areas for improvement and the point where all parties want to be in the future. This puts the proposed improvements in the animal health program in a clear, concise, and comprehensive plan.

The third step of the Palo Duro Veterinary Services method is the planning step. This step is appropriately termed because at any point in time an operation is in various stages of forward planning, plan implementation, or plan review and analysis.

It is important for the production specialist veterinarian to consider all possible options for improvement when formulating a plan. Common sense can keep the plan on track, but failure to identify less obvious courses of action can lead to short lived results. As with the goal setting and balance sheet, the plan should be set down in a written, well presented format.

Communication of the plan is one area that this method stresses and strives for excellence. As was stated in the

introduction, communication problems account for a large degree of implementation failures. Communication under this system is both verbal and written. Whenever possible verbal communication is documented with written material.

Constant re-evaluation is an integral part of the planning step. Often it is easier to set up a plan and start something than it is to constantly re-evaluate and keep the plan on track. Without a set of standard operating procedures and a formalized method of evaluation, it is difficult to refine a plan at the small detail level. Figure 1. is the feedyard checklist that is employed by this practice to cover topics of importance analyzed at every client visit. This concept can be applied with any herd health situation even though the areas discussed may vary quite extensively.

This company considers standard operating procedures such a critical area that specialized systems are used to evaluate the three main areas of the feedyard on a regular and timely basis. Pen management, processing procedures, and treatment procedures are analyzed regularly. Figure 2. is a daily hospital checklist that is followed by the hospital personnel and is the score card that is used by management and the veterinarian. Again the concept is the important aspect of the process. This system allows for early identification of failure to address the details of daily operations.

A word of caution should be voiced with the use of this type of evaluation system. Reporting of results of evaluation can be handled from a negative or positive standpoint on the part of management or the veterinarian. It is crucial that the obvious difference in approaches be understood and employed or employee dissatisfaction may be an undesired outcome.

**In summary, the Palo Duro Veterinary Services method of implementation can be viewed as a three step method of starting, working, and planning. This method requires confidence, organization, and leadership in the interaction with the client. Excellent communication skills and techniques form the glue that holds the interlocking steps together and establishes a basis of a long lasting relationship.**

Figure 1.

FEEDYARD CHECKLIST

Feedyard \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

HOSPITAL PENS

Population \_\_\_\_\_

Sanitation \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment Room \_\_\_\_\_

Ration & Hay \_\_\_\_\_

Water \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Hospital Management \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

CONVALESCENT PENS

Population & Movement \_\_\_\_\_

Feed \_\_\_\_\_

Water \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

REALIZOR PENS

Withdrawal Times Tagged \_\_\_\_\_

Last Test \_\_\_\_\_

Pen Sealed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PROCESSING PROGRAM

Techniques & Sanitation \_\_\_\_\_

Records \_\_\_\_\_

Changes (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TREATMENT PROGRAM

Present First Treatment \_\_\_\_\_

Retreat Program \_\_\_\_\_

Changes (specify) Therapeutic \_\_\_\_\_

Supportive \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DRUG INVENTORY & INVOICES

Storage \_\_\_\_\_

Invoice Review \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ANTIBIOTIC RATIONS

Preparation & Level \_\_\_\_\_

Duration \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Administration \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NEWLY RECEIVED CATTLE/PROBLEM CATTLE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PERSONNEL

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WEATHER CONDITIONS \_\_\_\_\_

FINAL COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NECROPSIES PERFORMED \_\_\_\_\_

NEXT ROUTINE VISIT \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 2.

Feedyard \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_

**DAILY HOSPITAL CHECK LIST**

	<b>EXC.</b>	<b>ADEQ.</b>	<b>NEEDS WORK</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>1. MEDICATION, TECHNIQUE</b>				
1. Proper site of injections	( )	( )	( )	_____
2. Proper amount per site	( )	( )	( )	_____
3. Needles changed frequently	( )	( )	( )	_____
4. Proper needle size	( )	( )	( )	_____
5. Equipment clean and functional	( )	( )	( )	_____
6. Aggressive, supportive care	( )	( )	( )	_____
7. Treatment for secondary conditions	( )	( )	( )	_____
8. Speed, efficiency of doctoring	( )	( )	( )	_____
9. Treatment response	( )	( )	( )	_____

<b>2. STRESS &amp; ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT</b>				
1. Cattle evaluated in pens	( )	( )	( )	_____
2. Standing, crowding in holding areas	( )	( )	( )	_____
3. Gentle, easy handling	( )	( )	( )	_____
4. Pens clean and dry	( )	( )	( )	_____
5. Facilities clean and dry	( )	( )	( )	_____
6. Plentiful pen and bunk space	( )	( )	( )	_____

<b>3. NUTRITIONAL MANAGEMENT</b>				
1. Bunks clean, unobstructed	( )	( )	( )	_____
2. Fresh feed available	( )	( )	( )	_____
3. Haying practices appropriate	( )	( )	( )	_____
4. Sick cattle consumption	( )	( )	( )	_____
5. Water tanks clean, accessible	( )	( )	( )	_____

© Copyright American Association of Bovine Practitioners; open access distribution.

EXC. ADEQ. NEEDS COMMENTS  
WORK

4. CATTLE MOVEMENT

1.	Overall sick pen population	( )	( )	( )	_____
2.	Flow through treatment to recovery	( )	( )	( )	_____
3.	Early, appropriate repulling	( )	( )	( )	_____
4.	Flow from recovery to go home	( )	( )	( )	_____
5.	Return practices	( )	( )	( )	_____

5. CHRONIC/RAILER MANAGEMENT

1.	Uncompetitive, spacious, dry	( )	( )	( )	_____
2.	Further individual treatments	( )	( )	( )	_____
3.	Chronics sorted for return, railers	( )	( )	( )	_____
4.	Railers checked for shipment dates	( )	( )	( )	_____
5.	Supportive care provided	( )	( )	( )	_____



© Copyright American Association of Bovine Practitioners; open access distribution.