

The Future of Food Animal Practice: An Introduction to the Symposium

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It's hard to believe, but according to *Veterinary Economics*, October 1984, veterinarians achieved the highest net earnings and purchasing power within the last 10 years—an annual practice net of \$42,000 compared to \$37,200 ten years ago. However, practitioners in the Midwest saw the sharpest drop—a big 19.7%. This took place despite a 9% increase in cost of drugs and an 8% increase in depreciation expenses. Expenses overall fell 6.25 percent. Decreased interest rates accounted for the increase in net profit.

	Midwest	Northeast	West	South
Gross	101,500	100,800	117,800	101,500
Expenses	42,500	45,900	49,800	48,800
Net	41,600	40,200	43,400	41,500

Large animal was not separated from small animal, yet we are faced with an increasing number of students graduating, break-even or disaster prices for red meat, milk and egg production, and practitioners are looking for new ideas and programs to maintain their incomes or even to stay with inflationary spirals.

How do we market veterinary services? We know 35% of the animal owners do not use veterinary services. Recently, over 300 farmers in England were surveyed as to the opinions of the profession held by farmers and veterinary

surgeons.

60% of the farmers still think of their veterinarians as “fire brigade” to be used only for emergencies.

30% use their veterinarians for general advice.

16% bought their animal health products from their veterinarian.

45% of the veterinarians used newsletters.

30% of the veterinarians held client meetings.

29% of the veterinarians undertook formal herd health programs.

31% had fertility schemes for cattlemen.

20% did no preventive work at all.

25% opposed advertising by the veterinary profession.

75% considered it inevitable that advertising by veterinarians exists and will continue.

Awareness of services a veterinarian can offer is not as high as it should be. Continuing education for the client is important but you better know a lot about management. We must develop expertise. Get involved with 4-H clubs, speak at animal health meetings. Don't let others come out to do it for you. I sense a real desire among practitioners to make this profession keep going as it has in the past. We are in a serious transition, faced with infringements and all sorts of problems heretofore unheard of.

It appears to me that the fittest, the most competent, aggressive practitioners will survive. What about you other guys? Sit and listen to these practitioners.

