

Factors Affecting Analgesic Use and Attitudes about Analgesia in Cattle Among Bovine Practitioners in the United States

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Introduction

Information on current analgesic use and attitudes about analgesia is an indication of animal welfare concerns among bovine practitioners. Such information has not previously been available in the United States (US).

Materials and Methods

A web-based survey was sent to US members of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners. The survey included questions about the degree of pain caused by diseases and procedures (pain scores), categories of drugs used, and percentage of animals treated with analgesics. Opinions about pain and analgesic use were also solicited. Statistical analyses were performed to identify factors associated with attitudes about pain, pain scores, and analgesic usage.

Results

There was a response rate of 30%, with a total of 690 usable responses. Examples of significant associa-

tions identified include: pain ratings were highest for C-sections in dairy cows and lowest for castrating calves less than 6 months old. The procedure most commonly treated with analgesics was abdominal surgery. Veterinarians with more dairy cattle in their practice generally gave higher pain scores, while veterinarians who did not attend a rural high school gave lower pain scores. Veterinarians who graduated prior to 1981 reported treating a higher percentage of lame cattle. Analgesic drug choices were associated with veterinary school attended, being raised on a farm, and attending a rural high school.

Significance

Knowledge of current usage of analgesics can inform animal welfare policies. Understanding the factors associated with analgesic use and with opinions about pain is critical to any discussion about appropriate use of analgesics.