

repeating how to pass a stomach tube or how to give an I.V. injection. That is one thing I heard at Denver: a great deal of criticism when veterinarians have to teach lay people to do some of these routine surgeries. In our country where there are so

many cattle, a veterinarian could not possibly do it all—they do everything and we could not take the time to do it all. Our time is too valuable to the company.

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## “Pet” Beef Cattle Practice

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I feel like a sheepman among cattlemen here this afternoon in talking about a topic such as “Pet” Beef Cattle Practice. I might as well have called it pleasure cow practice and I will not apologize but I will explain how I happened to come upon the assignment. Last year in a “bull session” with Dr. Harrington and a few others about practice concepts and directions about bovine practice, I made the remark that I had not heard much said in recent years about “pet” beef cattle practice as a replacement for the old backyard milk cow and that I thought it had potential for the bovine practitioner so I am here to talk about it! Let me say that this year in the United States about 25 million cattle of all breeds and mixtures of breeds will be finished in the nation’s feedyards. What is the potential to bovine practice of the giant feedlot where probably 60% or so of these 25 million feeder cattle are being finished this year? Have we now 100 veterinarians who devote themselves full time to feedlot practice? What is the potential of the large ranch herds? How many veterinarians are involved with them? I do not know. I know that of the approximately 40 million beef calves born this year in the United States, less than half are produced by commercial cattlemen—the commercial breeder of sufficient size to be a legitimate target for planned herd health programs for our professional consideration. More than half are produced by small herd owners; people who are in the beef production business for “pin” money. Perhaps the small beef herd is largely replacing the small chicken flock as the “pin” money producer for the small farmer so that is one potential that is still in existence—the old traditional small herd work. Another has appeared within the last decade or so which came to my attention without my really realizing it. The people

seeking help in bovine practice in my area were small herd owners whose primary interest in agriculture might have been the desire “to get away from it all” and the great outdoors: the city dweller who loved the country. Here was an entirely different breed of clan from the part-time cowboy farmer whose pride was hurt when he had to admit that his cow doctoring was not getting the job done and only called me when certain failure was no longer avoidable. In recent years there has been an exodus of affluent people from cities, people with ancestral roots in a rural environment and a strong motivation back toward the basic values - people buying small tracts of expensive land and building at least weekend hideaways on them. A few pleasure horses will not help to defray the costs or pay the taxes but a few cattle might! One such individual that I heard about recently bought a small farm and 10 heifers and waited for them to calf. He waited and waited, and then a friendly neighbor told him what he really needed was a bull so he traded the 10 heifers for one! These people do need help and much more to the point, they are demanding it and they are ready and willing to pay for it. No doubt, they do have as much right to it as the pleasure horse owner. No doubt either that their insignificant economy of size does not disqualify them from herd health programming. As a matter of fact, in my practice, it has been a rare occasion that I have made a fire engine call that I have not found the opportunity to turn the lesson in one way or another to herd health advantage. I think maybe even 20 or 25 years ago I was practicing herd health management before I had ever heard the term. Back to the point, these people have a justifiable interest in the economic performance of their small herds, however limited. They have the intelligence to seek

professional service and they love their animal, contrary to the admonition of the old cowman never to fall in love with one of the beasts! They do and perhaps this is the key to it. Additionally, these people are, even now, frequently complaining about the growing indifference of veterinarians to their problems but they are not likely in the foreseeable future to go away; in fact, I think they are going to increase in numbers rapidly and if we persist in our present eagerness to continue to

develop a line of work even more pleasant and less demanding upon our time, I wonder who is going to be looking after their animals. I know that we need the large herd specialist and I know that his necessary economic bias precludes him from providing service to this type of client. Do we then need a new type specialist in bovine practice? Is there fertile opportunity in this direction for bovine practice? Thank you.

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## Programmed Dairy Practice

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We are about 60% dairy, 30% beef and the rest horses. I think that if there is one concept that I find in the herd health management, or herd health practice or whatever term you want to call it, is a positive entity. Fire engine, or a called practice, is a negative entity. I think clients respond to this program very quickly and if you think back about your relationship with the old boy who called and knew he was going to spend money, they are not too good; it is a very negative thing then! When you are on a positive aspect, attempting to prevent problems from happening, I think he respects this approach; I think that he has been geared to this like he has been geared to having his automobile service problems or he has been geared to defrosting his refrigerator! I think the general public is now geared for prevention of problems. We are geared to prevent these problems but that is neither here nor there. There is one other factor which to me is very, very important. These individuals are working on my clients. I have 18 herds on herd health management programs, average age of client being 34 years old. The oldest client is 55 and these people belong to the PTA! Some of them are presidents of school boards; one of them teaches judo; they all have children who have 4-H projects; one of them is the president of the Texas Holstein Association. They have other things and these people want help. They do not figure their own income tax; they do not figure their own rations and they want people to come and say this is how we are going to do this—with a positive attitude and the end results are going to be so and so. When you make this projection you have

to have a little bit of confidence behind you. I would hate to see you put out that small light or whatever it might be. In other words, what I am really trying to say is that we do not have the problem here where dairying is a part-time occupation—these people are full-time dairymen. I have tried to put together the reason that I became involved in herd health management. At a meeting in Houston, a nutritionist from Iowa made a statement that he had a number of calves in eastern Iowa for a number of years and one day he woke up to the realization that a boy who had graduated a year before could get the same price that he could for pulling a calf or treating milk fever. His years of knowledge did not net him one penny except a little extra backache which hurt him a little bit more from squatting in that position that you may have had to get in! His hands got a little colder but he was not getting paid for his knowledge or experience. This made a little bit of sense to him. Have you read the article, "Are You a Veterinary Fire Fighter?" You need to get a copy of this. This is probably what we are all talking about. When I read this article, I got mad and, after all, who is going to tell me it is not alright to do these things! Do you really think that the veterinary profession in the United States is meeting the public need? Or, are we meeting your need? Are you going to tell agriculture what they need? I can guarantee you one thing: if we go on like we are, others will step in. We have students graduating today that want part of our market. All we have to do is what we did in the poultry business. We said that nobody wanted to treat poultry and we gave it