

When we initiate the plan we spend considerable time going over what the plan will do, what the charges will be, and roughly what he might expect the charges to be per cow over the period of a year. It has been my experience it will run from ten to fifteen dollars per lactating cow per year. At this time it is understood that if he has any questions he should bring them up and I will not be offended; likewise, I will do the same with him. Also, it is explained his problems will not be

completely eliminated, and should he begin the program he should expect to stay with it at least six months and preferably one year before deciding if he is happy with the program.

There is a possibility I might miss an occasional pregnancy diagnosis or miss treating a uterine abnormality that may need it, but to the best of my ability I will not do this. If at any time we come on some problems I cannot solve, I will do my best to find someone who can.

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## Cow - Calf Programmed Practice

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I am sure glad to see Dr. Fred Wood here from Osceola! I felt like a hayseed from Missouri with you people talking about 5,000 head! I felt I was in the wrong meeting but we are dealing with farmers and ours is a three man mixed practice in northwest Missouri. Our numbers are not going to approach 5,000 head. I started my practice about eight years ago and my main concern at that time was being with farmers that were bull crop people and my main concern was developing herd health programs for feeder pig finishing operations. The beef cows were a secondary enterprise to the hogs. The cows were just scavengers to pick up roughage and take up slack in the wintertime. At that time, the average cow herd was about 30 head and the feedlot that had 100 head was a sizeable operation, so that is just a basis to where we started eight years ago. We noticed about five years ago a trend was starting to develop in our feedlots and the people all of a sudden who previously were handling 100 head, were jumping up from 500 to 1,000 and some of them went even higher. Our cow herds were jumping from 30 to an average of about 100, with some going up to 700 and 800 so, in other words, almost overnight these farmers became feedlot operators and cow ranchers. As a result, a lot of these operators did not bring along a lot of experience or know-how into their specialized operations and it looked like a good time for us to step in with some sort of a herd health program to assist them and this is what I would like to present today. In five years our farmers tripled their cow herds and a lot of them did not have the ability to handle an operation of this size

so they were willing for us to step in to help them. As I look back at our first client on a herd health program and tried to pick out one factor that stands out above the others which helped us get our foot in the door, I think it was the mass influx of cows from the southwest and the west. Our Missouri farmers had to go out of this area to buy cows and a lot of them went into Nebraska, Colorado, Oklahoma and Texas and just bought whatever cows they could pick up. I am sure we had a lot of the colds that came out of that area but also a new disease entity for our area, namely vibriosis. In the past about the only contact the veterinarian had with these clients was an occasional call in the fall to vaccinate for blackleg and perform castrations. With this new disease coming in, breeding problems, which the operators could not handle, became common. Some of them did not have calves or they were calving year around, so this gave us an opportunity to visit the farm and start talking herd health. It was just an opener as far as we were concerned. As you know the diagnosis of vibriosis is not the easiest in the world so it gave us the opportunity to start testing some of their bulls for breeding soundness. A lot of times we did not know for sure if it was the bull who was infertile or if they had a vibriosis problem in their herd. We also started them on a vaccination program and led from there.

There have been other developments in the cattle industry that have helped us become more involved in herd health work. I think as these numbers increased from an average of 30 to 100, we had disease problems become apparent that

they were not used to, such as the scour and pneumonia complex. In many cases 100 cows were placed in the same acreage and calved in the same pasture which had the 30 cows previously. We had a lot more problems and they started looking to us to try to help them out. I think the exotic breeds have made it easier for us to go a step further in the door sometimes. We were doing 40 or 50 Caesarean operations a year in a lot of these places and this would give us an opportunity to advise these people on the selection of sires for their herds. I believe basically we became involved rather easily. Our people are not or would not have been receptive if I had gone out and said, "OK. You are going on a herd health program and we will be doing so and so." They probably would have run me off the place but by growing into it slowly, it has worked out well! I think we should start with fertility testing the bull and pregnancy testing the cows. Most of the people are receptive to this and they benefit from it. They pass the word on to their neighbor until he wonders if he should not be testing his cows too! Of course, from the pregnancy tests, etc., you can evolve into vaccination programs. I think it needs to be brought out that as these clients became more aware and the operation grew bigger, it put a little more responsibility on us to increase our knowledge and our skills where five years ago they would have thought I was the greatest guy in the world if I could tell them if that cow was pregnant! Now, they are wanting to know how many days she is pregnant and if she is going to be a hard calver or an easy calver. Whether you do it by formal education or go back and pick up some reproductive courses, or just reading journals, when you do get into the herd health programs it does require more effort on the veterinarian's part to keep abreast for these clients. Some of the operators are pretty sharp fellows. If we go out and rest on our laurels and think we can get by on a pregnancy test and tell him she is "open" or pregnant, there are a lot of cattlemen who can do that, and we have to develop our techniques to where we can, within a given period, tell whether the cow is 180 days

pregnant and so on. It is pretty hard to set up a fee schedule that is going to apply equally to the farmer with 100 head and no facilities and then to apply the same schedule to his neighbor who has 500 head and everything in the form of facilities and help around. What we have tried to do is set up a fee scheduled on an hourly rate and another schedule on a per head basis and you have to work out a schedule that is fair to both the client and for yourself. For example, we charge \$25.00 an hour and furnish the drugs at our retail cost. Personally, I do not go for 10% mark-up. I can make eight or nine percent on my money at the bank and I never have to worry about drugs or the cooler and if I can not get more than that, I would just as soon they bought them off the peddler! At the time the calf goes to spring pastures, they are brought in and all the bulls are implanted; the heifers are vaccinated, we have a clostridial problem in our area. Through the summer we do not have too many problems other than face flies. At this time we are recommending spraying at 30 day intervals along with dust bags. When they are brought in the latter part of September or the early part of October, they are weighed and branded. We decide which bulls we are going to cut and this particular client keeps the top 10% and we sell them as breeding animals. The rest are castrated and go back to the pastures for about two weeks to get over the stress and they are put on a creep ration to get them used to weaning. After two to four weeks, we bring them back in—the calves go directly into the feedlot; the cows are pregnancy tested; and foot trims, etc., are taken care of at this time. At the time when a person was starting out with about 35 or 40 head I was charging him by the head and was probably getting \$2.00 to \$2.50 per head. Now, if I were charging by the head, I would be getting \$5.00 or \$6.00 so you can see the difference! He did not squawk too much when I charged him \$100 for a couple of hours, but if I had charged him \$500.00 for that same couple of hours, he would be in there complaining; so you have to adjust your fees when you get into this work.