

Integrated Resource Management: Opportunities for the Veterinary Practitioner

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Definition

Integrated Resource Management (IRM) has been defined as "a management system which integrates people and technology to manage resources in order to obtain a projected level of profits in a given livestock enterprise (or business)." (1)

Basic elements of IRM are:

- a. People: Rancher, Manager
Technical experts (veterinarian, nutritionist,
engineer, etc. . .)
Financial experts
Extension personnel
- b. Technology base: Research data
- c. Economic consideration: Profit vs loss

Ranching is a business

Red meat production is not a "lifestyle", but rather a serious business if one expects it to remain a viable, sustainable enterprise. IRM gives an economic perspective to biologic, or physiologic, or medical concepts. IRM forces the rancher to ask...as NY Mayor Koch did... "How am I doing?" Is my enterprise profitable? Can the bottom line be improved? How? What are the needed changes? When? By whom?

IRM implementation is NOT POSSIBLE without production and financial RECORDS. Financial analysis of the ranching enterprise, enterprise budgeting and marketing strategies are key to sound decisions. (2)

Where does the veterinarian fit in IRM?

The practicing veterinarian may choose any one of the following alternatives:

- a. View IRM as just one more gimmick contrived by extension people and continue business as usual, hoping for bad weather, scours, shipping fever...and enough dystocias.
- b. Consider IRM as a good idea, but really not terribly important to spend much time on it. Probably a wait and see attitude just in case it catches up in the area.

- c. Believe that IRM would enhance opportunities to practice preventive medicine and exemplify the tenets of herd health, and
- d. Furthermore...benefit from IRM financially; getting paid, and getting paid well for implementing IRM...getting paid for improving the profitability of a given ranching enterprise.

Critical Success factors...and opportunities

Research with beef enterprises in Idaho (3), (Colorado, Nebraska and other states), has identified specific key indicators, critical to the economic success of the cow'n calf business. These are:

- a. Open cows at the end of the breeding season,
- b. Length of the calving season,
- c. Calf death losses, and
- d. Growth by each individual calf as well as total growth produced by the herd.

These critical success factors are very easy to name...but a thorough analysis and knowledge are required to determine means of improving them. Herein lie the opportunities for the practicing veterinarian.

Specific areas to consider are:

- Setting financial and production **goals** for the ranch. These goals must be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, related, trackable (4)
- Getting involved with the rancher in:
 - a. the financial and production RECORDS of the enterprise
 - b. development and selection of REPLACEMENT HEIFERS
 - c. control and prevention of PERINATAL MORTALITY
 - d. implementation of a system which incorporates: BULL SOUNDNESS EVALUATION (BSE), BODY CONDITION SCORING (BCS), PELVIC MEASUREMENTS, PREGNANCY DIAGNOSIS,

TOTAL PARASITE CONTROL and TOTAL HERD NUTRITIONAL MANAGE- MENT

Willing to interact and cooperate with other individuals:

Nutritionists, Ag. lenders, engineers, extension specialists, industry representatives, etc.

Benefits of IRM to the practitioner

The following benefits are listed in the Proceedings of Nov. 88 meeting of National IRM Leadership Conference (p. 62):

- a. IRM is an efficient method of getting the message to ranchers that veterinary medicine is an integral part of management.
- b. IRM is a complete "production medicine" program
- c. IRM provides factual information to clients
- d. IRM lets ranchers know that veterinarians DO CARE about profitability of a ranching enterprise
- e. IRM allows the veterinarian to achieve a high level of proficiency in herd health by interacting with specialists in other disciplines.
- f. IRM involves the veterinarian in obtaining, understanding and analyzing relevant records on the ranching enterprise
- g. IRM yields maximum economic benefits for the rancher and expands the income potential for the veterinarian.

The Winds of change

"We live in a time when one of the most important skills you can develop is the ability to stay abreast of change. Trend watching, information gathering, "looking out ahead"...all are important survival skills in the new era. Those who have the insights about change will thrive and prosper; those who have an obsolete knowledge base will suffer the consequences."-(Dennis Waitley & Robert Tucker in *The Futurist*, May-June 87).

Astute veterinarians and their organizations view IRM as an opportunity to (a) strengthen their public image, (b) excel in the practice of production medicine (c) improve the economic well being of their clients, and (d) expand their practice and the net income it generates. (5)

The opportunity is there...but "nobody will receive an engraved invitation" to participate in IRM.

References

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3. Duren, Ed: "Growth Programs: An IRM Concept", Proceeding of Meeting, Implanting for Growth, Sept. 1984, Alberta, Canada.
4. Blanchard K., et al: Leadership and the one minute manager (1985), William Morrow & Co., NY, NY: 111.
5. Walker, Jack: "A Veterinarian's Perspective of IRM", Proceedings NIRMCC (1988): 15-18.

