

# Marketing Dairy Herd Health

Jenks S. Britt, D.V.M.  
Russellville, KY 42276

Most dairy farmers are faced with financial obligations that require maximized production schemes to reach the level of profit to pay these obligations. Culling without herd health control is usually done by culling disease problem cows first: The others would be—

1. Mastitis
2. Non-breeders
3. Disease
4. Injury
5. Low Production
6. Temperament
7. Dairy Purposes

Farmers **don't** profit from visits from veterinarians to treat many of the above problems. Profit is best realized when disease allows a culling scheme as follows:

1. Production <5%
2. Mastitis <2%
3. Disease and Injury <5%
4. Temperament 1%
5. Dairy Purposes or Low Production 12%

Marketing dairy herd health is not a problem when the client realizes profit potential from veterinary service. Marketing may be a poor term for simply letting our clients know the many services that we may offer. Many animal health related services are offered by non-DVM's. Some of these are:

1. AI
2. Nutrition
3. Foot Care
4. Milking System Evaluation
5. Embryo Transfer
6. Animal Health Supply Sales
7. Genetic Mating Service
8. Computerized Farm Records

Nationwide DVMs could fill 1,000 to 2,000 of these positions by expanding the awareness of our abilities and training.

Look at a typical set of herd problems:

1. High Somatic Cell Count > 750,000
2. 13.5 Month Calving Interval
3. 2.25 Services per Conception
4. No Parasite Control
5. 20% Calf Mortality
6. Low Production-Poor Nutrition 11,000 RHA

Correction of the above problems may result in an estimated increased cash flow of:

Mastitis Improvements	\$18,300
Reproduction	2,250

Calf Raising	1,350
Nutrition (Increased Production)	10,980
Deworming and Parasite Control	<u>3,660</u>
	\$36,540

Comparison of herds that used our services for emergency service only versus herds that utilized our herd health management capabilities is shown below:

<i>Emergency Herds</i> —	Veterinary Costs
	Low \$6.60/cow
	High \$54.43/cow
	Average \$17.06/cow
Production	11,770 lbs./cow
<i>Herd Health Herds</i> —	Veterinary Costs
	Low \$17.10/cow
	High \$82.64/cow
	Average \$33.74/cow
Production	14,670 lbs./cow

Cost of the Herd Health Program

$$(H.H. Herds) \$33.74 - (Emergency Herds) \$17.06 = \$16.68$$

Increased Profit from the H.H. Program—

Herd Health Herd Production	14,670/cow
Emergency Herd Production	<u>11,770/cow</u>
	2900
	<u>×.12</u>
	\$347.16
Cost of H.H. Program	<u>-16.68</u>
Net Return of H.H. Program	\$330.48

As Production Goes Up So Does Vet Cost/Cow

Herds below 12,000 averaged \$18.05 vet cost per cow/year.

Herds above 16,000 averaged \$66.44 vet cost per cow/year.

Marketing our capabilities depends on several factors, but some of the important items include:

*Communication* — Talk with your clients frequently about their problems, being *interested* in their total farming operation finances and realize they are *doing you* a service by calling you.

*Educate* — Educate both yourself and your clients. Don't let your clients read about recent advances in a lay journal that you are not familiar with. Budget money for your own CE and pick *good* seminars, not *social* seminars.

*Inform* — Inform your clients about lab reports, how you treat animals, newsletters, etc.

*Expand* — Don't limit your animal health related activity just because it wasn't taught at "Auburn or OSU." Try new ideas - they won't all work but we tried a new idea (embryo transfer) six years ago and built it into a \$300,000 per year

business for one vet and technician working 3-4 days a week.

*Be Professional* — New marketing ideas need to follow AVMA standards on conduct, but advertising, newsletters, meetings, sales, and promotions can all be done in a professional manner.

