

# The future of the cow-calf veterinarian

Christine Navarre, DVM, MS, DACVIM-LA  
School of Animal Sciences, Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

## Abstract

The cow-calf industry is very diverse in size and type of operation which makes predicting future veterinary services needs difficult. Solid business principles apply to both the cow-calf industry and veterinary practices. Veterinarians are educated in a diverse number of subjects and can combine their own knowledge with the expertise of others to better serve cow-calf clients.

**Key words:** Beef cattle, cow-calf, veterinarian

## Cow-calf industry

The cow calf industry is very diverse. It is made of seedstock, commercial and show/hobby producers. Most cow-calf operations are less than 100 head and are not primary source of income for producers. Some consolidation and vertical integration are expected but how fast and to what extent is debatable. Access to local services, including veterinary services, will impact the speed of industry changes. Audits, traceability, technology, etc., will also have an impact.

The cow-calf industry is a low margin business and cow-calf veterinarians must understand inputs and efficiencies, especially nutritional inputs. They should understand the industry in their practice area and recognize marketing trends and opportunities for their clients.

## Cow-calf veterinary practice

Veterinarians should understand how economy of scale and diversification of services impacts their small business. They should look for opportunities to offer unique and exceptional services. Specific services that may be offered include nutrition and grazing management, record systems, audits, disaster planning, comprehensive parasite control programs, low stress cattle handling, secure beef supply planning, genetics, etc.

Future cow-calf veterinary businesses that service large scale producers are likely to be larger, multi-person practices that leverage technology to better serve clients and offer flexibility to employees. They may be integrated with other food animal species practices to share expertise from non-veterinary experts. They may also find benefit in integrating with other agricultural businesses. Supplying veterinary services to small scale/hobby cow-calf operations will continue to be a challenge.

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