

Practice Tips

“Save the Knees” and Other Nuggets from New York

Julie Zdrojewski, DVM

Dairy Veterinarians Group, Argyle, NY 12809

Barn Prescription Sheet. (Fig. 1)

This is a neat and handy format in which to write out your instructions for followup care of a cow you have treated. It is the size of a half-sheet of paper, and consists of an original, which you give to the client at the farm, and a detachable self-carbon copy, which you take to your office. Written instructions for followup care re-enforce oral directions, and are particularly important where a farm has employees giving treatments, or if you are using drugs in an “extra-label” manner. The carbon copy of your own recommendations is useful in-house (e.g., in case the client phones your partner later). Regrettably, it may also prove invaluable in case you need a medical record for legal reasons.

Long Yards for Calf Hutches.

A client of ours bought good hutches but didn’t want a soggy front yard at each one, as he had seen elsewhere. So he made each yard out of two 16-foot-long sections of heavy 4x4 woven wire fence panel. Each panel is bent 90 degrees at the front of the yard, so the yard is 12 feet long.

Three heavy four-foot rods hold up each yard. One at the front holds the two panels together (the end of one panel is bent slightly, the end of the other is left straight, and the rod stitches the two together.) Two run through rings at the outside front corners of the hutch.

The calves have dry ground to be on with less bedding used. Also we have dry ground on which to work on the calves.

Ketchup Bottle.

For dosing a cow with glycol, a long-necked, flat, plastic ketchup bottle works nicely. It fits inside the cow’s mouth, so she spits out a lot less of the drench. And the bottle does not come apart, so you or the client don’t spill glycol all over your pants.

Monthly Client Letters.

We have sent out one-page client letters with monthly bills most months for the last six years. We get it done by following three rules:

Rule 1: The letter is written, edited, agreed on, and photocopied BEFORE the process of closing the books for the month and printing the bills is even begun. That way when the bills are ready for review and mailing, so are the client letters.

Rule 2: The essay must fit onto one page. This forces the

writer to be concise. It also increases the probability that people will read it.

Rule 3: All partners must agree on contents. You will be astounded at how often disagreements arise on what you think are the simplest, most elementary points. Cries of “You’re telling them THAT?!!” will echo off the walls. In fact the exercise is good for everyone.

Keep copies of old client letters in your practice vehicle. Whip out the appropriate one when a discussion of a particular topic arises on-farm. A related tip for convenience is to name the file for each letter in your word-processing program with a descriptive name: LEPTO, not MAR90.

Knee Pads.

We started using knee pads when one of us was kicked. Since then we have worn them on all calls. You never realize how much time you spend on your knees until you stop the pain! Although I have switched to a production-oriented, business-advisory, MBA-style of practice, people still insist on calling me out occasionally to put in cast withers. I admit that I accept such calls. These pads are not just foam. They are hard shells, like little football helmets, lined with foam.

They are available as product number 509 from Gempler’s, telephone 1-800-382-8473.

Baby Pig Warming Pads.

Those who work out of a station wagon, or any other vehicle with a flat bed, might like to know about this way of keeping drugs from freezing. All winter long the bins I keep my supplies in sit on fiberglass pads that have toaster wires built into them. I just run the cords out my car window to plug in my car every night. Come Spring I clean out my car and take the pads to the basement to start my tomato plants.

Two sources of baby pig warming pads are Kane (1-800-247-0038) and Nasco (1-800-558-9595.)

Figure 1.

DAIRY VETERINARIANS GROUP
RD 1, Coot Hill Road
Argyle, NY 12809
518-638-8566

J. Zdrojewski, DVM

J. Ehrlich, DVM

BARN PRESCRIPTION SHEET

Date: ___/___/___

Cow: _____

Rx:

Test milk at ___ milking after last treatment.

Meat withholding ___ days.

Changing the treatment can change the length of time a cow tests positive.