

Establishing and Maintaining a Health Program Under Intensive Feedlot Conditions

A. J. Edwards

*Dept. of Surgery and Medicine
College of Veterinary Medicine
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506*

Introduction

A feedlot health program serves as a very positive attempt by the veterinarian to provide specialized service to a highly specialized area of livestock production. The use of veterinary expertise in preventive medicine is far more productive to the modern feedlot where technicians are utilized to do the routine procedures.

Many different health programs are available to the feedlot owners, and the challenge to establish successful plans lies clearly with the veterinarian who is willing to commit the time necessary to develop the program and then work to see that it is carried out properly.

This paper will present the following eight main points of a feedlot health program and discuss their significance:

1. Long-term goals and immediate objectives
2. Procedures
3. Health Record system
4. Receiving schedules
5. Guidelines for detection of sick animals
6. Treatment schedules
7. Recovery pen management
8. Fees

Goals and Objectives

There is a need to establish long-term goals that set sights high for a preventive medicine program. Equally important, immediate objectives should be defined that specifically outline the responsibilities of the veterinarian to the feedlot that can be used to evaluate the progress of the program. Following are examples:

Long-term Goals

1. Reduce losses due to disease (both death losses and treatment costs).
2. Avert disease outbreaks through proper vaccination, early detection, and diagnosis.
3. Provide professional assistance in health management.

Objectives

1. Establish and maintain a health record system.
2. Provide written schedules:
 - a) Processing
 - b) Treatments

3. Provide positive training for cattle crew in:
 - a) Observing and handling cattle
 - b) Administration of vaccine and treatments
 - c) Review of animal systems through post mortems
 - d) Explanation on use and action of drugs
 - e) Sick pen management and nursing care
 - f) Sanitation
4. Provide critical evaluation of overall feedlot operation to management in written report and include:
 - a) Review of records
 - b) Specific pen problems
 - c) Treatment responses
 - d) General cattle health
 - e) Progress of cattle crew in accomplishing assigned responsibilities
 - f) General feedlot conditions, pens, alleys, bunks, fences, waterers
 - g) Cleanliness of processing and treatment areas
5. Communication with management relative to new developments, products, or techniques.

Procedures

This is the protocol to be followed by the veterinarian in carrying out the assigned objectives. This list of procedures may be the most important part of a health program. It serves as a set of directions to use in carrying out the objectives, and this helps to keep the veterinarian from only addressing the emergency or crises issues at hand. This list should be tailored to fit the particular feedlot and management, and it should be closely adhered to once established.

The frequency of the scheduled visits should be established at the time the program is outlined. The commitment to this schedule is very important in preventing the visits to revert to emergency or crisis visits only.

Procedures

A regular visit will be made with the following tentative schedule:

1. Meet with the manager and review:
 - a) Problem areas
 - b) Records—health, performance
 - c) New cattle

2. Review record system, processing schedules, treatment programs, and drug inventories.
3. Inspection of yards with list of pens, days on feed, pen treatments.
4. Check new cattle pens, sick pens, and hospital areas.
5. Meet with cattle crew and review their problems and responsibilities.
6. Perform necropsies and collect samples for laboratory procedures.
7. Submit written report to manager and review areas of concern.
8. Establish tentative date for next visit.

Health Records

An effective record system maps progress and is a vital aid in documenting success (or failure) of parts of the health program.

A number of forms can be utilized to aid in accumulating and utilizing this information:

1. The *Morbidity Mortality Report* should be used as a monthly summary and can be very valuable in identifying problems as well as evaluating performance. This same form can be used to make quarterly and annual reports. This report not only summarizes the number of animals being treated for the various diseases but also identifies the stage of the feeding period this occurs, the cost per treatment, as well as the number of animals requiring re-treating. This information is important in evaluating the treatment response and is used to support the clinical impressions observed in the hospital pens.
2. The *Daily Health Reports* are a means of accumulating the information for the monthly report as well as informing the office or bookkeeper of the daily charges made to a particular pen. These are also used to report cattle movements and processing procedures.
3. The *Pen Treatment Card* gives information on the health status of an entire pen or group of cattle without requiring a new card for each sick animal. It also lists treatments used, their effectiveness, animal identification, temperatures, and date animals were treated. These cards are kept in a file box in the treatment room where the procedures are carried out and should be reviewed by the veterinarian during his scheduled visit.

Receiving Schedules

A printed receiving schedule should be made for each feedlot, and a copy of this schedule should be made available to the personnel that are responsible for carrying out these procedures. Posting this schedule near the processing facilities serves as a specific set of directions and also as a reminder of the importance of these procedures.

The schedule should include not only the vaccinations but all other procedures to be carried out while the animal is in the restraining chute such as wormers, implants, vitamin injections, and external parasite control.

Guidelines for Detection of Sick Animals

A very important responsibility of the veterinarian involved in a feedlot health program is the continuing education of feedlot personnel in the detection of sick animals. Cattle that are in the early stages of incubation of pathogenic organisms have a far better chance of responding favorably to treatments. Detection of sick animals early, separation from the rest of the cattle, proper treatment, and good nursing care are really the backbone of a successful health program.

Establishing a set of guidelines that describes some of the signs to look for in detecting illness in cattle can be used to help elevate the performance of the regular pen riders and reinforce their knowledge as well as serve as a training manual for new employees.

The feedlot diseases are listed according to systems, and a code number is assigned to the diseases. This list is then posted near the treatment chute and also reduced in size and placed on a small (7.5 cm x 10 cm) card to be carried by the cowboy to aid in making the record collection simple and the data collected more uniform.

Feedlot Disease List and Codes

System	Code Number	Diagnosis
Respiratory	1	Respiratory (pneumonia)
	2	Respiratory chronic
	3	Diphtheria
	4	Allergic pneumonia
	5	Honker
Digestive	6	Bloat
	7	Noneater
	8	Scours
	9	Overeating
Skeletal	10	Coccidiosis
	11	Foot rot
	12	Lameness
	13	Injury
	14	Downer
Urogenital	15	OB (Calving)
	16	Prolapse
	17	Uterine infection
	18	Waterbelly
CNS	19	Brainer
Miscellaneous	20	Buller injury
	21	Heat stroke
	22	Unknown
	23	Miscellaneous

Treatment Schedules

The veterinarian should establish treatment schedules as he plans the health program. Well-defined treatment

schedules tend to put emphasis on the time of treatment rather than on the specific drug to "save" sick animals. They serve as an accurate set of directions that include the disease condition to be treated, the drug(s) to be used, the route of administration, and the days withdrawal before slaughter.

An example of a treatment schedule is Figure 1. This schedule should be distributed to the people responsible for treating the sick animals as well as posted near the restraining chute to reduce the chances for error in following the directions.

Feedlot Treatment Schedule		Date _____		
Respiratory disease (R)				
Day	Rx Code	Drug	Route	Withdrawal
1	Y1	25 ml Tylan-200	IM	
		30 ml Oxytet-100	IV	
		5 ml Dexamethasone	IV	
		10 ml B Complex	IV	
2	Y2	25 ml Tylan-200	IV	21 days
3	Y3	25 ml Tylan-200	IV	

Figure 1.

Recovery Pen Management

An area that is often severely neglected in the feedlot health program is the recovery pen. Animals may be detected early, treated properly, and then if crowded into "sick" pens and allowed to become overcrowded, a problem is created rather than solved. At the end of a three- or four-day treatment regimen, the animal should be returned to its pen, placed in a convalescent pen, or placed in a chronic or realizer pen.

Good nursing care may be the best medicine that an animal can receive. If this is neglected, it is usually of little value to "waste" expensive medicine on the animal. Hospital pens should be as the terms implies, conducive to recovery. Having at least four sick pens so that each day's hospital pulls can be kept separate is very worthwhile as it not only

provides a better atmosphere for the sick animal, but it does not impose the added stress of sorting the animals daily. It is also much easier for the personnel doing the treating to make evaluations on their treatments since they do not have to compare the recently pulled animal with one that has been treated a number of days.

Fees

Establishing a fee for a health program can be one of the main stumbling blocks in its path to success. Just as the health plan should be straightforward, so should the charges for such a program be well defined.

There are basically only three ways for the veterinarian to get paid for his professional assistance in a health program: as a consultant fee, on a call basis where the charges are for professional services plus products used, or a combination of the two. Defining these alternatives to the feedlot manager can be one of the first steps in establishing the fee:

1. *Consulting fee*—a professional retainer that is determined by the amount of service performed, amount of time spent, and the number of cattle involved with no products being furnished by the veterinarian. This is the most professional approach and allows the veterinarian to be totally objective in recommending products since the fee is not based on any product mark-up.
2. *Call basis fee*—Charges are made only for the time spent at the feedlot or for specific services rendered such as diagnostic procedures and mark-up on products dispensed to the feedlot. This method of charging had the disadvantage of being an emergency-type involvement with little time spent on the actual health program.
3. *Retainer fee plus supplying certain products*—Charges for the regular health visits can be quite minimal with the main income being derived from products dispensed. The highly competitive business of animal health products makes this option product-oriented rather than professional service.

Paper presented at the XIIIth World Congress on Cattle Diseases, Durban, S. Africa, Sept. 17-21, 1984.

Paratect[®]

(MORANTEL TARTRATE*)

SUSTAINED RELEASE CARTRIDGE

CATTLE ANTHELMINTIC



*The Breakthrough Delivery System
That Makes Dewormers Obsolete*

pfizer

See us at booth No. 37