

MEDICINE AND MANAGEMENT

By CARL TROOP, VMD



You can help the vet and cut costs too

Farmers are searching frantically for any place where they can cut costs or receive the optimum returns for any particular investment.

One of these areas is veterinary services and medicine. Your veterinary bills may also seem extremely high, just as do parts, hay, and bedding. But unlike some other areas there are some things which can be done to lower the cost of veterinary service or at least being sure of getting

the most for your veterinary dollar.

First, let's look at the veterinarian. He has spent an average of eight years education after high school at a cost of approximately \$5000.00 per year plus living costs. Add to this what he could have been making if he had been working those eight years and you have considerable investment to make up. This he has to do over the years of practice by using his knowledge plus continuing experience in providing farmers his

veterinary services. He uses his time to make his living; his livelihood. This is the big item, "his time." It is his "time" spent applying acquired knowledge and experience for which he is paid. And anything you can do to decrease the time he has to spend doing unnecessary work is bound to decrease costs and increase the economical efficiency of his visit. To the veterinarian, time is money.

Some specific examples. In our practice there are many jobs charged by the piece: dehorning, reproductive exams, vaccinating, etc. However, there is a standard amount of time we feel it should take to do each item. If the time runs over that because we

have insufficient help or have to chase animals over large areas to catch them, or the farmers do not have adequate facilities, we have no choice but to charge for the added time needed to chase, catch, wrestle, or whatever.

Many farmers just don't realize the busy schedules most veterinarians have. Many veterinarians have more work than they can handle anyway, so why shouldn't they give a break to the farmer who has help available, pens bedded, heifers tied or closely confined, animals to dehorn in one area instead of scattered over the farm, records readily available, etc. Remember, your veterinarian is charging for his

time. Make that time efficiently used.

Another help is for the farmer or someone who knows what is going on to be present. There are often problems or questions which need answering, or just help needed. If it is not possible to be present, leave a note with complete information. If any kind of examination is needed leave complete information on date fresh, bred, and general performance. If in tie stalls be sure the neck chain or rope is in good condition. There have been many times I have been working around the head where the rope was only holding by a single strand or two. It doesn't take much to break these and guess who pays for chasing the cow around the barn and back into her stall.

Another area which has caused increases in the cost of veterinary services is the loss of many drug sales. Veterinarians used to be able to provide part of their income from dispensing most of the medications used on the farms (mastitis tubes, pills, etc.). The drug trucks on the road have changed that so most veterinarians have subsequently increased

fees for services to compensate for the loss in drug sales. Most farmers need a veterinarian. If they have decided to support a veterinarian plus a drug peddler, that is their business but they could cut their costs by supporting only one. In our practice we give price breaks to clients who purchase most of their drugs from us. Others choose to support both. That is their option. However, they are paying twice.

So far we have been discussing only what the farmer can do to increase efficiency of the veterinary services, to provide the most for his veterinary dollar. I would like to hear from farmers as to what the veterinarian can do or change to be more efficient or effective. Any ideas, suggestions, or complaints please send to Medicine and Management c/o Lancaster Farming, Box 366, Lititz. I will be glad to comment on all reasonable replies, whether agree or disagree.

The most important thing to remember is, we need each other. The better we understand each other, the greater our help for each other can be.

Grant urges rejection of Canal treaties

WASHINGTON, D.C., — U.S. Senators were urged recently to reject the Panama Canal treaties by the leader of the nation's largest general farm organization.

Allan Grant, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, said the Panama Canal is vital to the security and commerce of the U.S. and an important factor in world trade. Both, he said, would be jeopardized by an endorsement of the new treaties.

"Fixed payments to Panama authorized by the treaties will mean higher canal tolls on grain, thereby decreasing the competitive advantage of U.S. grain in the world market," Grant said in letters to all members of the Senate.

Grant pointed out that the canal is a barrier to northward movement of diseased cattle.

"The continuing existence of foot-and-mouth disease on the South American continent poses a real threat to the livestock industry of the U.S.," Grant said. "The canal also is a barrier to other livestock diseases now found in South America and

which have not yet been introduced into North America."

Grant called for a study to be made on the possibility of an alternate route to the existing canal.

"For now," he added, "the proper protection, maintenance and operation of the canal require complete control by the United States. Therefore, we oppose ratification of the Panama Canal treaties."



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