

Are You Taking Advantage of Your Vet?

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When writing a magazine article or monthly clinic newsletter I draw on my recent experiences, speak to clients, other vets, and dairy farming friends for ideas on pertinent topics of interest. I strive to write articles that provide value to any dairy farmer reading the article and present the information in an organized, easy to understand fashion. I had a hard time coming up with a great article topic this time around so I looked back on the articles I have written over the years and the many great topics covered by my fellow OABP members. It struck me, Dairy Veterinarians in Ontario have an absolute abundance of knowledge, and as an industry this knowledge is an underutilized resource. Feed prices, fuel costs and building costs have increased tremendously over the last year, and milk price has not followed suit. Thus, it is in everyone's best interest to increase milk production in a cost effective way. Utilizing your Veterinarian for more than pregnancy checking, sick cow work, and the odd problem consultation can have a huge impact on productivity and your bottom line.

Reproduction

This is an area in which we are very well versed in. Getting cattle in calf in a timely manner has a huge impact on total milk output and profit. If you're not currently doing the following things it is time to chat with your herd health vet:

- Scheduled herd health visits every two weeks. Larger herds will see an increased economic benefit from weekly herd health visits. The sooner you know a cow is open, the quicker you can get her bred back.
- Fresh Checks. Are your fresh cows clean and cycling? If not, we can get them cleaned up and cycling, but more importantly we can take a step back to the dry cow and close up groups and improve fresh cow health before treatment costs are incurred.
- Repro analysis. Using information found in programs like DairyComp, we can monitor reproduction parameters, spot problems early on and solve them before they get out of hand.
- Synch programs. We know them all. We can help you pick which one fits your operation. Too busy to run them yourself? Many clinics employ Veterinary Technicians who are great at this job.

Renovation or Building Consultation

When considering renovating your barn or building a new barn please take the time to show your Vet the drawings before you build. It is much easier and cheaper to make changes on paper. Veterinarians see many different buildings; we can help you spot problems before you build. We can suggest ideas and solutions which we have seen work well in other barns. We offer a different perspective and a fresh set of eyes.

Economic Analysis

SCC too high? Preg rate too low? Calf morbidity and mortality too high? Lame cows? We can use spreadsheets and research based figures to show you how much money a particular animal health problem is costing you. Working together we can come up with a plan to improve the problem, the cost of implementing and maintaining the plan and how much money you'll end up saving. Putting a dollar value on a particular issue, can really help drive change and improvement.

Nutrition

There is a vast range of nutritional knowledge within the dairy veterinary community, from basic practical knowledge to ration formulation. On farm meetings with your nutritionist and veterinarian are a great way to harness collective knowledge, build a nutritional plan for your farm and problem solve any on farm problems. If your vet and nutritionist haven't met, it's time to schedule a meeting.

ProAction

Many vets in Ontario are well versed with the requirements of the ProAction program. Having your vet out to go through your records, walk through the barn and review the requirements a few months before your ProAction validation is money well spent.

Udder Health

Udder health is something every dairy farm will struggle with at some point, and can have a huge impact on lifetime milk production, treatment costs, waste milk and involuntary culling. We can help with all aspects of somatic cell troubleshooting, such as DairyComp SCC analysis, milk culturing, teat dip selection, milking preparation routines, milking system analysis, proper choice and use of intramammary treatments, and teat end scoring.

Calf Health

Calves are the future of your milking herd. Optimizing calf health is one of the most important things you can do on your farm. Areas we can provide guidance on include:

- Problem solving calf scour or pneumonia issues;
- Calf barn design & ventilation;
- Creating optimal vaccine protocols for your farm; and
- Feeding recommendations

Data Analysis & Monitoring

Regular data monitoring is key to improving your farm. Using programs like DairyComp, your vet is able to observe and analyze reproduction parameters, milk production, transition cow disease, disease incidence rates, mortality rates, and lameness. It is important to remember we can only use data that is actually entered into the system. By

regularly monitoring and analyzing the data we can help you pinpoint bottlenecks in your operation and help you set goals for improvement.

On Farm Animal Health Monitoring

There are many diseases and health parameters we can measure on farm at herd health. A few examples are listed below:

- Monitoring ketosis at herd health. Subclinical ketosis has a huge impact on milk production and reproduction and you don't know it is there unless you test for it. It doesn't take much time to monitor ketosis at the end of each herd health.
- Calf health scoring & lung ultrasounding. This is a great way to monitor pneumonia in calves and make culling decisions and keep our healthiest youngstock.
- Measuring & tracking heifer growth. Growing heifers quickly helps minimize costs, how do you know how you're doing without measuring?

Next time your vet is on your farm, have a chat with them and figure out how you can take advantage of their knowledge and use that knowledge to improve your operation.