

Health and Welfare Best Practices to Improve Profitability

Tim Goodbrand, DVM
Vermilion Veterinary Clinic
@vermvvet

What is a best practice?

- A management tool that is readily adoptable by the industry which improves the productivity/profitability of the industry.
- A health and welfare best practice will improve profitability because animals are more productive when they are healthy and unstressed (happy).
- These eventually become standard practices.

Tim's Top Ten

- Gleaned from 19 years experience in the field as a mixed animal veterinarian.
- Put into practice as a beef producer.
- Completely random.
- Some are very simple, some require a little more effort.
- Here goes....

1. Unique Individual Animal Identification.

- The animal must be easily identifiable at a distance by the care-takers of the animal.
- Good quality visual ID tags.
- Trim the ear hair!
- This is the link between data and animal.
- No multiples!
- Then move to RFID's!

2. Herd Vaccination Program

- What are the disease concerns in your area?
- What are the disease concerns in your herd?
- Previous experience/history/level of risk?
- Discuss with your veterinarian.
- Write it down!
- If diseases get out of control in a herd –this is a health issue, a welfare issue, and a profit issue.

3. Parasite Management Program

- The pour-on products are no longer considered adequately effective for both lice and worms.
- Move to two products –internals and externals.
- Strategic timing of application
- Lots of studies showing inverse relationship between parasites and production.

4. A Veterinary-Client Relationship

- This is a specialized business with fewer veterinarians servicing the sector.
- The cattle are worth more than ever.
- More regulations regarding dispensing of medications.
- You will get better service and better advice if you pick one veterinary clinic and stick with it.
- That translates to healthier animals.

5. Cattle Handling System

- Must be safe and effective for owners and cattle.
- Continually improve –see what doesn't work and fix it, or try something new.
- Bad systems –upset people, upset cattle; injured people, injured cattle.
- Make handling cattle enjoyable and you will do more of the right things at the right times.

6. Study Cattle Behaviour

- Know how to move cattle
- Study cattle handling methods
- If cattle are moved in a calm and effective manner, they will perform better (less stress)
- Cattle copy their owners.

7. Feed Test and Ration Balancing

- Test all forages.
- Simple balance at first.
- Get your protein, energy, Ca:P ratio, Vitamins and Selenium right and you are well on your way. (The first 80%)
- Keep fine tuning it.
- Every year is different

8. Culling Practices

- Cull mercilessly for production related issues!
- Make a list and stick to it!
- There's lots of cows out there.
- A herd with consistent culling practices will have healthier animals and therefore be more productive.

9. Proper Drug Usage

- Directly related to the Vet-Client relationship
- If you are not sure –ask your vet.
- Don't over treat.
- Use the right drug at the right dosage by the right route for the right condition.
- Lots of inappropriate use of OTC drugs –penicillin, oxytetracycline, sulfas
- If drugs are used properly, animals will be healthier.

10. Pain Management

- Animals feel pain.
- Animals in pain are less productive.
- We have good products to mitigate pain.
- The industry is under constant scrutiny.
- Imagine it was you...