

# How to open doors for producers to use your services

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## Abstract

Becoming a successful food animal practitioner takes more human psychology than most of us care to admit. Working through individual cow medicine into a leadership role on an operation allows a more substantial veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR), greater loyalty from clientele, and increased profitability. Reaching this goal requires an ability to perform physical tasks while encouraging herd-based medicine. These can be accomplished by capitalizing on opportunity, being available, and then following up to develop your desired relationship.

**Key words:** mixed animal practice, associates, services, practice management

## Introduction

Differing demographics and client goals determine the need for individual animal medicine. By design, individual animal medicine is on an as-needed basis and does not allow a consistent, predictable income for veterinarians. Clients are becoming more capable of performing these tasks without the input of a veterinarian, leading to a need for consistency and demand for veterinary services. This can be combated by making yourself valuable to your clientele through tangible services.

## Selecting Opportunity

When considering associate positions, ask the right questions that will allow you to select opportunity. Most students will ask me what percent different species we see as a practice. While this does help you to determine current case load, it does not help you to determine what your caseload will be. Consider what you actually want your job to be. Do you want to work large herds, small hobby farms, and/or valuable individual animal medicine? Not all positions and therefore not all opportunities are created equal. You must consider what value opportunity holds for you. Are you willing to take a lower financial offer that will allow you the opportunity to develop the clientele you want? Does your personality type fit with taking over an existing clientele or the clients the owner doesn't want or do you fit better with forging your own path? The following are more fitting for veterinarians who want to forge their own path and develop their own clientele. Taking over an existing clientele from a departing veterinarian is another task that is most likely more based on that clinician's style.

## Consider Profit Areas and set Tangible Goals

Determine the quantitative value of your desired case load if it does not currently exist or the quantitative value of you offsetting the current caseload or adding services to these clients. You must know what your goal is to know if you are winning. An example here, would be to add a certain number of clients quarterly, or to transition "shot gun" clients to managed clientele. Setting a tangible goal will allow you to determine billable hours for that task, the support staffs that you will require, and the longevity of the endeavor.

In our practice we developed what we affectionately call our CO-OP. It is not a cooperative by design, but more a retainer fee status clientele that allows us to retrieve charges that we were leaving on the table and to develop clients into operating with standardized management plans instead of disaster management. We included service items, accessibility of their chosen veterinarian, and group-purchased drug sales into this group to demonstrate value to the client. Since the initiation of the group, we have billed more chargeable hours for both physical services and consulting services on all clients enrolled. We have also been able to develop a VCPR more thoroughly with these clients and have orchestrated a sort of hierarchy in our practice area where new clients desire to be a part of the group.

## Demonstrate Physical Ability

Being available is the number one client starter. One of my associates described this as "be the yes man". Most large animal consultation-based clients start with individual animal medicine of one species or another. I have made numerous ranch clients through emergency services for various species. Clients perceive work ethic and availability value to exceed perfection in performance of task. In my experience, clients will accept a steep learning curve for a whole lot of try.

## Demonstrate Mental Ability

A well-rounded veterinarian should be prepared to work and talk within the same interval. Prime time to capitalize on being physically able is during or immediately after the event. Prepare management talks about common individual animal problems.

- Have a vaccine teaser talk prepared for sick calves.
- Have a genetics and bull selection talk for calf pulls.
- Have a biosecurity and prevention talk prepared for "broke bull" calls.

Make these talks be short and concise. Be specific and do not ramble. Always be too busy to stay for the full discussion at that moment but show eagerness to get back together and help review. You sure do not want them to have to spend money on this issue again, you are there to help them prevent as much as medically possible. You are the yes man and will follow up.

### **Initiate Follow up**

Do not leave an individual animal call without a plan for follow up. Follow ups can vary from calling owner to check on the animal's recovery to sitting down to write a formal management plan. Regardless of the follow up reason, allowing the client to speak to you in the aftermath opens the door for questions. We have also found that follow up from a company stance is important. You can offer this through educational meetings, handouts, or through advanced scheduling opportunities. An example here is during bull breeding

soundness testing season, call the clients who have not classically tested their bulls. Tell them you are working through your schedule and do not want them to miss out getting on your books. Leaving doors open for services is the second step that takes being the yes man to the next level of orchestrating management.

### **Conclusion**

To successfully be "THE" large animal veterinarian you want to be, you must first define that for yourself and select the appropriate position. Subsequently, being physically available, accessible, and willing allows you the opportunity to demonstrate your mental ability. Once you have set this groundwork, always follow up. Lastly, ensure that you are circling back around to your tangible goals to know which of your efforts are working and being profitable.