The Decision To Treat

Despite superior herd management, some animals are susceptible to certain diseases and will become sick. The decision to treat should be evaluated critically, based on specific criteria regarding the following:

- The medical effectiveness of a drug to return the animal to a non-diseased, productive state.

- The economics of treatment versus not treating or culling the animal. Consider the following factors in evaluating your options:
  1. Meat value of the animal
  2. Genetic/production value of the animal
  3. Cost of drugs and labor to treat
  4. Disease risk to herdmates

- If you decide to treat, evaluate the response to drug therapy carefully. Professional assistance is essential for the following reasons:
  1. Drug therapy does not "cure" the disease in many cases. Rather, it reduces the clinical signs and the clinical signs may recur.
  2. Many diseases are naturally controlled or cured by the animal's own natural defenses. Hence, a drug may only appear to work.
  3. Many drug therapies fail because of incorrect choice of drug, choice of drug dosage, route of administration or duration of treatment.

Your Veterinarian’s Role in Herd Health

Your veterinarian plays an important role in preventing, diagnosing and treating diseases. Selecting the right treatment depends on accurately diagnosing the problem. Work with your local veterinarian to develop a health care program designed to fit your specific needs. Establish a Valid Veterinarian/Client/Patient Relationship (VCPR).

The American Veterinary Medical Association defines a Valid Veterinarian/Client/Patient Relationship (VCPR) as follows:

An appropriate veterinarian/client/patient relationship exists when (1) the veterinarian assumes the responsibility for making medical judgments regarding the health of the animal(s) and the need for medical treatment, and the client (owner or caretaker) agrees to follow the instructions of the veterinarian; and, when (2) there is sufficient knowledge of the animal(s) by the veterinarian to initiate at least a general or preliminary diagnosis of the medical condition of the animal(s). This means that the veterinarian has recently seen and, is personally acquainted, with the keeping and care of the animal(s), and/or by medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises where the animal(s) are kept; and when (3) the practicing veterinarian is readily available for follow-up in case of adverse reactions or failure of regimen of therapy.