



Good Production Practices: Understanding the Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship

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Purpose: Teach youth to examine the veterinarian-client-patient relationship and emphasize why it is so crucial for herd health to have a good relationship with their veterinarian.*

Materials Needed

- One copy of one scenario per child or group of children.

Steps

1. Have children each take one scenario page (of any species) and work individually or in groups to answer the questions.
2. After working independently to answer the questions, discuss their answers as a group, trying to identify the common responses in the scenario groups (i.e., the answers from Scenario 1 groups will all be similar, but they will be different from the answers found by the groups with Scenario 2).

Remembering What Is Important

The veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) is a crucial part of herd health. Veterinarians who are familiar with your herd know what problems you typically experience and can quickly make a diagnosis. It is worth the extra cost to have your animals occasionally health-checked by the veterinarian in order to prevent further problems.

A VCPR is important because your veterinarian can help you identify possible treatments for common diseases or outbreaks. For example, very few products are labeled for usage in goats. If you have a VCPR, you can easily deworm or treat your goats without an expensive farm visit, using over-the-counter medications that aren't labeled for goats (extra-label use prescribed by your veterinarian).

A VCPR also allows you to establish a herd health plan that includes proper vaccinations, deworming, etc., which are necessary to keep your animals healthy and to prevent disease outbreaks in your herd/flock.

**This activity has been developed to supplement the information that can be found in the National Pork Board Good Production Practice No. 2: Use a veterinarian-client-patient relationship as the basis for medication decision-making.*

Swine: Scenario 1

Your veterinarian has been a big part of your 4-H swine project from the beginning when you bought your first gilt; you now own 10 sows. She helped you set up your herd health program to know when to give vaccinations, and she helped you learn how to identify and diagnose a sick animal so you don't have to call her every time you have a problem. Your vet comes to your farm a few times per year when you need to have regular vet checks for your animals or when you need health papers so you can show at the state fair. You go out to feed your newly weaned pigs and notice that some of them have severe diarrhea and a few are even vomiting. You have never seen these problems before with your pigs.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your pigs would be different if she didn't know your herd as well as she does?

Swine: Scenario 2

Your 4-H swine project started when you bought your first gilt six years ago; you now own 10 sows. You have contacted your veterinarian a couple of times throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your herd. She has come out to write health papers on the pigs that you are taking to the state fair each year, but she only looks at those pigs specifically because you don't want to pay extra for her advice on other pigs or on your herd in general. You go out to feed your newly weaned pigs and notice that some of them have severe diarrhea and a few are even vomiting. You have never seen these problems before with your pigs.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your pigs would be different if she were more familiar with your herd? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your herd?

Swine: Scenario 3

Your 4-H swine project started when you bought your first gilt six years ago; you now own 10 sows. You have contacted a couple of different veterinarians throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your herd. You have a different vet come to your farm to write health papers on your pigs for the state fair because there is one vet in particular who will write papers for \$20 cheaper than everyone else, but you never contact that vet for a herd visit because pigs aren't the vet's area of expertise. You go out to feed your newly weaned pigs and notice that some of them have severe diarrhea and a few are even vomiting. You have never seen these problems before with your pigs.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your pigs would be different if she were more familiar with your herd? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your herd?

Sheep: Scenario 1

Your veterinarian has been a big part of your 4-H sheep project from the beginning when you bought your first ewe; you now own 20 ewes. She helped you set up your flock health program to know when to give vaccinations, and she helped you learn how to identify and diagnose a sick animal so you don't have to call her every time you have a problem. Your vet comes to your farm a few times per year when you need to have regular vet checks for your animals or when you need health papers so you can show at the state fair. You go out to feed your lambs and notice that a round spot is starting to form on the neck of a lamb, and all of the wool is missing in that area. You have never seen a spot like this before on one of your sheep.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your lamb would be different if she didn't know your flock as well as she does?

Sheep: Scenario 2

Your 4-H sheep project started when you bought your first ewe six years ago; you now own 20 ewes. You have contacted your veterinarian a couple of times throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your flock. She has come out to write health papers on the lambs that you are taking to the state fair each year, but she only looks at those sheep specifically because you don't want extra bills for her advice on other lambs or on your flock in general. You go out to feed your lambs and notice that a spot is starting to form on the neck of a lamb that looks round, and all of the wool is missing in that area. You have never seen a spot like this before on one of your sheep.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your lamb would be different if she were more familiar with your flock? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your flock?

Sheep: Scenario 3

Your 4-H sheep project started when you bought your first ewe six years ago; you now own 20 ewes. You have contacted a couple of different veterinarians throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your flock. You have a different vet come to your farm to write health papers on your lambs for the state fair because there is one vet in particular who will write papers for \$20 cheaper than everyone else, but you never contact that vet for a flock visit because sheep aren't the vet's area of expertise. You go out to feed your lambs and notice that a spot is starting to form on the neck of a lamb that looks round, and all of the wool is missing in that area. You have never seen a spot like this before on one of your sheep.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your lamb would be different if she were more familiar with your flock? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your flock?

Beef: Scenario 1

Your veterinarian has been a big part of your 4-H beef project from the beginning when you bought your first heifer; you now own 15 cows. She helped you set up your herd health program to know when to give vaccinations, and she helped you learn how to identify and diagnose a sick animal so you don't have to call her every time you have a problem. Your vet comes to your farm a few times per year when you need to have regular vet checks for your animals or when you need health papers so you can show at the state fair. You go out to feed your yearling heifers and notice that one of them is walking with a slight limp, and the area right above her hoof is slightly swollen. You have never had this problem before in your herd.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your heifer would be different if she didn't know your herd as well as she does?

Beef: Scenario 2

Your 4-H beef project started when you bought your first heifer six years ago; you now own 15 cows. You have contacted your veterinarian a couple of times throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your herd. She has come out to write health papers on the heifers that you are taking to the state fair each year, but she only looks at those cattle specifically because you don't want extra bills for her advice on other calves or on your herd in general. You go out to feed your yearling heifers and notice that one of them is walking with a slight limp, and the area right above her hoof is slightly swollen. You have never had this problem before in your herd.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your heifer would be different if she were more familiar with your herd? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your herd?

Beef: Scenario 3

Your 4-H beef project started when you bought your first heifer six years ago; you now own 15 cows. You have contacted a couple of different veterinarians throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your herd. You have a different vet come to your farm to write health papers on your heifers for the state fair because there is one vet in particular who will write papers for \$20 cheaper than everyone else, but you never contact that vet for a herd visit because cattle aren't the vet's area of expertise. You go out to feed your yearling heifers and notice that one of them is walking with a slight limp, and the area right above her hoof is slightly swollen. You have never had this problem before in your herd.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your heifer would be different if she were more familiar with your herd? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your herd?

Meat Goat: Scenario 1

Your veterinarian has been a big part of your 4-H meat goat project from the beginning when you bought your first doe; you now own 20 does. She helped you set up your herd health program to know when to give vaccinations, and she helped you learn how to identify and diagnose a sick animal so you don't have to call her every time you have a problem. Your vet comes to your farm a few times per year when you need to have regular vet checks for your animals or when you need health papers so you can show at the state fair. You go out to feed your does and find one of them breathing heavily; she is off by herself, and she won't come to feed. You have never seen one of your does act this way before today.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your doe would be different if she didn't know your herd as well as she does?

Meat Goat: Scenario 2

Your 4-H meat goat project started when you bought your first doe six years ago; you now own 20 does. You have contacted your veterinarian a couple of times throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your herd. She has come out to write health papers on the goats that you are taking to the state fair each year, but she only looks at those goats specifically because you don't want extra bills for her advice on other goats or on your herd in general. You go out to feed your does and find one of them breathing heavily; she is off by herself, and she won't come to feed. You have never seen one of your does act this way before today.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your doe would be different if she were more familiar with your herd? If so, what different things should you be doing to make sure the veterinarian is more familiar with your herd?

Meat Goat: Scenario 3

Your 4-H meat goat project started when you bought your first doe six years ago; you now own 20 does. You have contacted a couple of different veterinarians throughout those years when you have had a major health problem in your herd. You have a different vet come to your farm to write health papers on your goats for the state fair because there is one vet in particular who will write papers for \$20 cheaper than everyone else, but you never contact that vet for a herd visit because goats aren't the vet's area of expertise. You go out to feed your does and find one of them breathing heavily; she is off by herself, and she won't come to feed. You have never seen one of your does act this way before today.

1. What should be your first step?
2. When should you contact your veterinarian?
3. Do you think that your veterinarian's response to your doe would be different if she were more familiar with your herd? If so, what different things should you be doing to make the veterinarian more familiar with your herd?

Answer Key to Scenarios

Scenario 1

In each Scenario 1 given, there is an established VCPR. This allows a veterinarian to be more familiar with your herd/flock and your health plan.

1. Possible answers might include separating the animal from the others, taking the temperature of the animal, and calling your veterinarian to describe the symptoms over the phone.
2. You should contact the veterinarian after making certain you have a good description of the symptoms.
3. The response that the veterinarian gives you will be very different because she knows your herd/flock and their health plan. She will know what the animals are being fed (including minerals) and how the animals have been treated in the past. With a good VCPR, your veterinarian will most likely be able to diagnose the problem over the phone and prescribe treatment that will be much less expensive than a farm visit, which might be required if you don't have a good VCPR in place.

Scenario 2

In each Scenario 2 given, a very limited VCPR exists. This will allow the veterinarian to be somewhat familiar with your herd/flock, but the vet will not know your herd/flock health plan.

1. Possible answers might include separating the animal from the others, taking the temperature of the animal, and calling your veterinarian to describe the symptoms over the phone.
2. You should contact the veterinarian after making certain you have a good description of the symptoms.
3. The veterinarian might be able to diagnose the problem over the phone, but it is highly likely that she will need to make a farm visit if a prescription drug is needed. If the veterinarian had a better relationship with you and your herd/flock, she would be more willing and better able to diagnose the problem and suggest treatment. To establish a better VCPR, your veterinarian should be involved in setting up your herd/flock health plan, which includes annual vaccinations, preventative treatments (if necessary), a mineral program, and other regular herd/flock health needs (Bangs vaccinations, health papers for shows, etc.). Your veterinarian should not only know your health plan but should also know your animals and the goals of your operation so she is able to make the best recommendations for your specific situation.

Scenario 3

In each Scenario 3 given, there is not a VCPR in place. The veterinarians are not familiar with your herd/flock, and they will not know your herd/flock health plan.

1. Possible answers might include separating the animal from the others, taking the temperature of the animal, and calling a veterinarian to describe the symptoms over the phone.
2. You should contact a veterinarian after making certain you have a good description of the symptoms.
3. A veterinarian might be able to diagnose the problem over the phone, but it is highly likely that she will need to make a farm visit. If the veterinarian had a better relationship with you and your herd/flock, she would be more willing and better able to diagnose the problem and suggest treatment. To establish a better VCPR, your veterinarian should be involved in setting up your herd/flock health plan that includes annual vaccinations, preventative treatments (if necessary), a mineral program, and other regular herd/flock health needs (Bangs vaccinations, health papers for shows, etc.). Your veterinarian should not only know your health plan but should also know your animals and the goals of your operation so she is able to make the best recommendations for your specific situation.