

# PRACTICE

# BUILDERS

THE authors of the following articles were requested by the features staff of the *Iowa State College Veterinarian* to submit ways and methods by which they build their practices, and to bring out any points whereby practitioners can make their work easier, can improve upon their services offered, and can make for good client relationship. The staff of the *Iowa State College Veterinarian* wishes to thank these veterinarians who wrote and invites any practitioner to also submit "Practice Builders."

## Large Animal Practice

Many ideas may be used to advantage in building a practice, however, from a personal standpoint, I shall consider several that I feel are most important. These points are considered for a large animal practice such as mine where very little dispensing is done. The office is located in the home and 95% of the calls are made in the field.

Four points which I consider essential in building a practice are as follows:

1. Cleanliness.
2. Practical field surgery and anesthesia.
3. Promptness in appointments.
4. Application of recent veterinary research in the field.

I shall elaborate on these four points.

Clean personal appearance is essential. The use of clean coveralls or coats along with routine scrubbing of boots after every call is very important. How can a

veterinarian stress sanitation to his clients without he himself following basic sanitary measures? Handy boot scrubbing pails are available and the time spent in such operations is short.

Practical field surgery such as cesarean sections and rumenotomies are ideal practice builders. Such operations not only satisfy your clients, but they provide very good ethical advertisement. Good anesthesia, especially of the nerve blocking type, convinces the client of veterinary knowledge.

Emergency calls may alter a schedule considerably, but in case of routine vaccinations, etc., promptness in servicing the appointments is noteworthy and appreciated by the clients. Clients that can rely on promptness will usually have the animals in readiness and have additional help available if needed. This expedites the calls considerably and offers more satisfaction among the clients.

Attendance at state and local veterinary meetings and keeping posted on latest veterinary research is important. The veterinary library should include the latest books and periodicals. New diseases are constantly confronting the veterinarian and veterinary therapy is changing daily. It is very important to keep up with this data as many clients are well aware of these conditions from reading farm periodicals.

Many other things are essential also in practice building. They may include

friendly relations with neighboring veterinarians, use of good veterinary products from ethical companies, solid business practices, and cooperation in community affairs.

Various practices may vary according to localities, but it is my belief that the four points stressed in this article are applicable to any practice building.

**J. L. Noordsy, D.V.M., KSC '46**  
**Marion, South Dakota**

### **General Practice**

One who deals in services must give just that, good service. This, above all, is the foundation of veterinary medicine. It is pertinent for you to know that there are three of us working together as a partnership; a 1912 graduate of Kansas City Veterinary College; a 1946 graduate of Iowa State College; and a 1953 graduate of Missouri University.

One of the things we do which we think helps to build our practice is to have consultations about various cases. Although the client is often times not aware of these, it does help us to arrive at a better diagnosis in most instances.

We are also able to give prompt attention to almost all calls. Our clients seem to appreciate not having to wait several hours before we get to a dystocia. We pride ourselves in that one of us is available practically all of the time.

In order to give good service, one must have the necessary equipment, physical and mental. We practice from a clinic. Our clients can avail themselves of the opportunity of bringing animals to us instead of having us come to them.

Since we do practice from a clinic, we are able to have some extra equipment. We have all major surgery brought to the clinic. Our recovery percentage on caesareans has zoomed since starting this practice. As a matter of fact, this is true of all of the surgery we do. Good surgery is always a practice builder.

Client relationship is very important and there are many ways to create a favorable client-veterinarian relationship. The principle thing to do is give the client the feeling that you are definitely interested in saving or making him money,

whichever the case may be. Make him feel free to consult with you about any questions that may arise. Above all, always be honest with the clients.

It is our opinion that packaging dispensing items is important. A clean and attractive package always appeals to the client better than some old sack or dirty jug. Proper labeling can help the attractiveness and add to the resale of more drugs.

Collection is another important way of creating and maintaining practice. It has been often said that a client or customer who owes a bill is not as likely to come back as the one who does not. Do not get the name of being "easy" as far as collections go.

We feel that cleanliness, both personal and of the physical plant, aid us in creating business. For example, a man came to our clinic for the first time and his comment to his neighbors was that our veterinary clinic was cleaner than their local human hospital. Although we cannot keep it absolutely immaculate, it is our goal.

Our newest, and probably our best practice builder, is our diagnostic laboratory. It is not fancy or complete, but we are adding to it at intervals. Our poultry diagnostic work has increased and we are getting more income from this type of service. We are also getting more income from other types of diagnostic services rendered.

These are the points which we feel are the most important as far as practice builders are concerned.

**Clair M. Hibbs, D.V.M., Mo. '53**  
**David City, Nebraska**

### **General Practice**

It is highly controversial as to what constitutes a "practice builder." It is largely a matter of opinion of those concerned. A veterinarian who has regularly utilized a technique will not place as much value on it as one who has made a change and noted that he is receiving more calls for his services employing this technique.

A veterinarian, locating in an area in which veterinary medical service is lacking or poorly rendered and there is poor

relationship toward clients and neighboring veterinarians, will find a greater selection of things he will consider practice builders.

Since a veterinarian is charged with the duty of combating animal diseases, his first step must be cleanliness. This covers a broad field. I wear overalls while making a call. Before I leave the farm I take them off. My street clothes are free of stains leaving me presentable in the office. I carry a bucket, brush and disinfectant for the purpose of washing my boots before leaving a farm. This one thing has probably brought more favorable comment than all other combined. My instruments, drugs and other gear are neatly packed in metal cases in the car. Everything has its place and is returned after it has been used. Empty containers are collected and brought back to the office where they are burned. By using instrument cases instead of cardboard boxes, my car does not look like the box on a garbage truck; although, it might look like I am leaving for a long vacation.

Most clients like to know when the veterinarian will arrive after being called. At all times, I set a time with some leeway. This allows the client to go ahead with his activities so that he doesn't have to sit around and await my arrival. Also the patient is more apt to be confined when I arrive so that less time is spent in making the call. If I should be unduly delayed, I call ahead and inform the next client.

I find that it is important to stock a full complement of drugs and supplies to enable me to meet the demand without several days delay. I keep an adequate stock of drugs and supplies in the car. It saves time because I do not have to stop at the office between calls. The opportunity for dispensing is greater if the car is well stocked. I have a greater satisfaction in stocking drugs and supplies from strictly ethical sources. In the majority of cases these items cost the client less than the lay products available to him.

Fees are always an item for discussion. I have set fees which I sometimes vary according to the case. I do not believe in "gouging." Usually, when that situation

arises, the case warrants a higher fee anyway. Neither do I condone "undercharging." Clients are skeptical of a veterinarian who performs services for less than others. Set a reasonable fee, perform commendable services and the rest will take care of itself.

There are times when the veterinarian feels as though the client deserves reprimanding. This can and should be done, but with a few well chosen words. It isn't necessary to use profanity and derogatory remarks or dwell at length. The client usually has a sense of guilt so there is little use in adding insult to injury.

Contrary to the opinion of many, don't be a "joiner." Nothing can spotlight a newcomer any quicker than joining every group that extends an invitation. People soon form the opinion that you are trying to "run" the town. Pick out a group on your own social level. At the same time choose an organization in which your wife and family can participate.

In a situation where there is ill feeling among neighboring practitioners, it is best to keep an attentive ear and faithful tongue. It is human nature to induce one to talk maliciously about a colleague. A salesman once told me that an advertisement that carried a knock didn't sell anything.

**George Firkins, D.V.M., ISC '55  
Kirkland, Illinois**

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### **Small Animal Practice**

My practice is confined to small animals and my remarks are those dealing with this type of practice. The procedure in a mixed or country practice may vary a little, but the fundamentals of building a practice and client relationship are essentially the same.

At the moment there are many methods recommended on how to build a practice, some even going to the extent of certain legislation to achieve this purpose. It is necessary of course to have laws protecting the standards of any working group, but in the main, the type of practice you conduct and its success and reputation depends solely on one person and that is yourself.

In recent years there seems to be a trend for the veterinarian to be more concerned in his outside life and activities than in the time he is to spend in his practice. You can not have a good practice and give service to your clients unless you have your heart in your work and enjoy every minute of it. If this is not your thinking, and it is your desire to be a forty-hour-a-week man, then you should not be a veterinary practitioner.

Considering the viewpoint of the small animal veterinarian, I would list the following points which I believe will do more than anything else to build your practice and develop client relations.

1. Personal life and personal appearance; look and act like a professional man.
2. Maintain a clean well organized hospital and keep it that way 24 hours a day. Whether old or new, there is no excuse for a dirty hospital. A certain amount of income should go back into your hospital each year in upkeep and equipment.
3. Spend a certain number of hours each week in reading and study. This may have to be done at home and at night.
4. Attend all meetings possible each year pertaining to your field of work, and share your responsibility in these associations.
5. Be conscientious and thorough in the diagnosis and treatment of patients.
6. Study the economic situation of your community. Fees should be fair to both you and your client.

To me it all boils down to the fact that if you wish to develop a good practice and have the good will of your clients, it is necessary for you to offer the best type of service that is your ability to give. It is necessary to treat clients and their patients kindly. Courtesy and understanding are invaluable assets. If you like your work and are willing to put forth the necessary effort it is doubtful that you will have to worry about your practice and client relationship.

**John N. McInay, D.V.M. KSC '28**  
**Omaha, Nebraska**

## **General Practice**

When a practitioner sits down long enough to reflect on those things in his practice of particular value in building and maintaining that practice, he may feel as this one does, and that is a little humble. The many vivid memories that immediately crowd into the reflecting mind somehow confuse the slick presentation of a neat set of formulae for success. They are memories of sins of omission and sins of commission, of things that would have been done differently if one had only known better, or of things that should have been said or left unsaid. When these things crowd in upon the conscientious practitioner at a time when he hasn't been just upset by a sin of one of his clients (who are not infallible either), he should feel a little humble, and grateful for the measure of success he enjoys financially, and happy that many of his clients and other acquaintances award him some degree of respect for his professional abilities, and for his worth as a man. What, then, of those whom he has tried faithfully to serve without having been able to impress animal or owner with his competence or his sincerity? Isn't it disturbing to know that not all who have called upon the practitioner respect him, and that some might even publicly disparage his ability and even his very character? And isn't it discouraging in retrospect to think of failing at times to satisfy an owner when trying to do what should be done, and discovering later that the owner found satisfaction instead in some worthless placebo or mumbo jumbo of someone less conscientious or less capable?

The early thrill of achievement stimulates the beginning practitioner, and it is well that it does. After four or five years in practice there comes the humility, the grateful feeling for the faith still placed in him; for then there is the inescapable realization that things have not always gone as they should have, and — even more sobering — there is the equally inescapable knowledge that the professional man will never stop making mistakes in practice until he is through practicing. Where, then, shall the conscientious prac-

titioner find comfort and a basis for self-respect, and an inspiration to continue as in the past? Where, indeed, can any professional man turn to find the peace of mind that will sustain him? There is refuge only in the knowledge that he has always done his very best in every way. Therein lies the main force behind building a practice. Techniques, skills, and knowledge are essential tools, but for those who will be satisfied with nothing less than perfection, the main force in building a practice and being able to live with it, and with oneself, after the realization that perfection will never be achieved, is the knowledge that one has always tried to do his best. Our only regrets should be for those occasions that time, impatience, or exhaustion have pressured us into doing less than our best to do a job "fair to the animal, to the client, and to ourselves."

**Hugh M. Wallace, Jr., D.V.M., Tex. '50  
Mound City, Missouri**

### General Practice

I often wonder what the results would be if we went about advertising our various services and products over the air and through the press on a competitive basis. I've been asked several times by clients and other persons why we as an individual or as a group don't advertise. My reply, when first out of school, was that it isn't ethical. This answer seemed to satisfy the person, but after a few inquiries the answer didn't satisfy me. I began asking myself, "What does this mean?" This sounds as if we're memorizing the 10 commandments. Maybe it should be our practice commandment. Now my answer is that we are not commercializing a product or service. We are not trying to induce practice by doing things cheaper than our colleagues. We are attempting to serve the livestock industry in an honorable and a sincere way. We first attempt to reach a diagnosis and then treat according to our best know-how and ability. I believe this answer has satisfied our clientele more and gained more respect for us. They see that we are not trying to "hang" products on them that are not

beneficial or not even indicated. We further indicate that in most instances a diagnosis can not be made unless the animal is seen, unless it is some obvious condition. Therefore we cannot advise proper treatment. We would be very foolish to enter a shoe store, buy a pair of shoes that the shoe man picks at random, and return home to find that the color doesn't blend with our wardrobe and probably be the incorrect size. So we believe that this uncommercialized way of handling a practice is a good practice builder, whether it be a large or small animal operation. True we may lose a client occasionally, but this is only temporary — he'll be back.

Being informative is also very beneficial. By this I mean giving the client a straight forward answer and all the information at your disposal. He has called you for an attempted diagnosis and respects you more if he is told what might be wrong and what we are attempting to do.

There are occasions when we can't make a diagnosis, so he must be told of the probabilities and the possible outcome. We are as human as he is and it isn't necessary that a positive diagnosis be made at all times. Don't embarrass yourself by making a positive diagnosis and later on post mortem find out you are completely in error.

Develop a personality that is pleasant to him and not one that makes him fear to even call you. He likes to be spoken to with a pleasant tone and with respect. A gruff or flippant attitude is not good — you'll lose him.

Handle his animals with care and respect. They are his property and demand attendance that you would expect if you were a patient. Don't curse or punish the animal unnecessarily if it does step on your toe or kick or strike you. Approach the animal with caution and quietly. The majority will stand for an examination.

Explore and discover his interests. Visit with him for a few minutes or as long as time will permit. He'll enjoy this and it is surprising what you can gain from his knowledge and opinions. Don't aggravate him on political issues. Discuss it with him and be sympathetic. Be a "middle of

the roader." Our profession is veterinary medicine and not politics.

We find that by knowing the names of the wife and the children helps much. We carry a note-book with the names of the children and upon a return visit or subsequent call they sure beam with pride if you can remember their names. We also carry favors in the car to give to the children from time to time. Suckers and gum sort of dictate who is going to treat the next illness — you or self-treatment.

This subject of self-treatment brings a thought to mind; we are all "do-it-yourself" enthusiasts by nature, and pride ourselves in some of our accomplishments that have been created in this manner. We find that if the animal has been treated by the owner, don't condemn the owner. Show him where he has erred in a pleasant way. Don't become angry at him, but show him where continued, ill-advised treatment is not compatible with his intelligence and the respect his animals demand.

We always have someone around to answer the phone. Our client is very satisfied to know that when he does call he will receive an answer of some kind. It is annoying to call some person several times and not receive an answer. If no one is around to answer, when he finally reaches you, the animal may be relieved.

Thank you notes are not time consuming and repay themselves. We try to send a note of thanks to persons when they pay their accounts, especially those that are received by mail. They appreciate this and it gives them surety that the check has been received and their account has been credited.

This all boils down to the old adage, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The golden rule and kind manners go a long way in life.

**Ruben S. Kufirin, D.V.M., ISC '41  
Benson, Minnesota**

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The first case of atrophic rhinitis in swine ever recorded in England occurred in a Landrace boar imported from Sweden in February 1954. The disease was diagnosed in June 1954.

## **EXPERIMENTALLY PRODUCED URINARY CALCULI IN SHEEP.**

The effects of some dietary factors on the incidence of urinary calculi in sheep and on urinary excretion are reported.

Eighty crossbred white sheep wether lambs were divided into 16 lots of five sheep each and were fed a mixed grass alfalfa hay for 100 days. Water and salt were fed free-choice. During this period, no symptoms of urinary calculi were shown.

Each lot was then placed on one of sixteen pelleted concentrate-roughage diets for a period of 124 days. The variables in the diet were phosphorus, potassium, beet pulp and beet molasses.

Thirtytwo days after they had started on thir experimental diet, the first case of calculi was recorded. A total of 36 cases of calculi was produced during the 124 day test period.

The addition of potassium to the diets of 20 sheep resulted in 7 cases of calculi, while a phosphorus addition caused only one case. The addition of both resulted in 28 cases in 40 sheep.

The inclusion of beet pulp, at approximately 25 per cent of the diet resulted in 26 cases of calculi out of 40 test sheep. Ten cases were found in lambs receiving no beet pulp. The presence of beet molasses, at approximately 11 per cent of the diet had no adverse effects.

The highest incidence of calculi resulted when all the variables were added to the ration. Out of 20 sheep, 19 developed the calculi.

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[ Elam, C. J.; Schneider, B. H.; Ham, W. E. Experimentally produced urinary calculi in sheep. *Journal of Animal Science* 15: 800-815. (August) 1956. ]

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Antibiotics seem to have their greatest growth effect on animals with low grade infections.

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Cannibalism and pick-outs can be suppressed in poultry flocks by supplementing feed with 0.1 per cent methionine, an amino acid.