

Vet's Corner: Records Should Guide the Decision to Operate

What criterion does your dairy farm use to decide to perform abomasal omentoplexy to cure a cow with a displaced abomasum? In many cases, producers and veterinarians are guilty of relying on short term memory of the past three cases and not using all of the information that could be gleaned from complete record keeping.

In our practice, after each surgery, a staff member calls the farm 2 or 3 days following surgery and gets a report for the surgeon on:

How much and what type of feed the cow is consuming,
How much milk she is producing,
And if she died or was sent to slaughter.

Going back four months, for the last 320 cases that we got feedback from, we learned that:

15 farms lost or sold cows shortly after surgery
37 cows were lost or sold shortly after surgery
5 farms suffered the most with the loss of 22 animals

These records were useful, because we can proceed with surgery on the vast majority of farms with stronger confidence of a successful outcome. And this information, led us to undertake transition cow management workups on the farms that are suffering poor surgery recovery rate.

Of course, most of the cows that did not recover did not have DA as the only cause of their problems. Many were complicated with type II Ketosis and Fatty Liver Syndrome and or Metritis-Peritonitis. By keeping long term records of the outcome, the producer can predict the outcome of surgery on future complicated DA cases.

For farms that perform their own procedures to correct DA's, record keeping of this type is necessary to monitor technique proficiency and case selection. Don't rely on short term memory to guide the decision to operate.

Kent E Henderson, DVM
Northwest Veterinary Associates, Inc.
Hugamoo@comcast.net