

Title: Dairy Business Communication from the Veterinarian’s Perspective

Group: Academy of Dairy Veterinary Consultants Spring Meeting

Date/Location: April 26, 2014 in Seattle, WA

Purpose of the Workshop -- Provide dairy practitioners with the knowledge and skills to evaluate and improve dairy organizational communication with the end result of improving animal health care and team effectiveness.

Learning Objectives

- Recognize that communication is an essential clinical skill that can be learned and applied on farms
- List examples of effective/ineffective communication
- Describe a framework for understanding communication structure on individual client farms
- Describe a conceptual framework for effective communication
- List barriers to effective communication
- Create a message on introducing dairy communication to clients
- Model attentive listening – getting more from consultation visits with clients
- List ways to motivate change on the farm

Background – An extensive body of knowledge in health care communication exists that has led to a structure for medical communication. This structure, when applied and practiced, improves medical outcomes and patient satisfaction. A number of veterinary colleges have also been providing training to veterinary students on client communication to improve animal care. *This framework for effective communication works.* However, many practicing veterinarians have not been exposed to this opportunity. In this short program, the faculty will incorporate the research on client communication and research results from the WSU: Cornell Dairy Communications project to introduce the framework and its use to dairy veterinarians.

Faculty – Suzanne Kurtz PhD, Bill Sischo DVM PhD and Dale Moore, DVM PhD with Mike Wedam, DVM

Agenda (4-hour program)

<i>Where are you now? (Hand in your personal assessment at registration)</i>	Moore
1. Introductions	Moore
2. Purpose and Objectives	Moore/Kurtz
a. Rationale for Developing Communication Skills	Kurtz
3. Results of research into Dairy Organizational Communication	Sischo
4. Barriers to Effective Communication	Kurtz/Moore
a. Communication Models that aid understanding	Moore
5. So, How do we make it better?	Kurtz/Wedam
a. First Principles of Effective Communication	
b. Calgary-Cambridge Guides	
6. Motivating Change (in you and your clients!)	Moore
a. 4 Stage Model of Learning	Kurtz
b. Dealing with Conflicts and Defensiveness	Kurtz
7. Assessing Dairy Communication Structure	Sischo/Moore

- a. Making a plan for a change
8. Evaluation – Clicker Questions
Moore

Evaluation

The pre-assessment asked participants to rank themselves with regards to specific goals of the workshop as well as to evaluate what stage of learning they might be in, the importance of communication information to them, and their level of commitment and confidence with using new information they might learn (Appendix A). The post-program assessment (using an audience response system) evaluated their stage of learning, importance of the information they just learned and their level of commitment and confidence to using the material. The overall course evaluation included questions on effective communication and confidence in evaluating the communication structure.

Twenty-two participants turned in a pre-assessment.

1. Developing personal and working relationships with clients (and their employees in animal care) at all levels. Range 1-5. Median=3. 68% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
2. Determining the needs of clients by asking the right questions, listening and confirming before acting. Range 2-5. Median=3. 64% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
3. Seeking input from clients to continuously improve services. Range 1-5. Median=3. 68% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
4. Reporting to clients on a timely basis, both in writing and orally, on issues relating to herd health/ progress. Range 2-5. Median=3. 68% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
5. Identifying potential problem areas and recommending alternative actions to meet farm goals. Range 2-5. Median=3. 54.5% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
6. Understanding the organizational structure of the dairy business. Range 1-5. Median=3. 63.6% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
7. Understanding formal and informal lines of communication and reporting. Range 2-5. 77% ranked average to needs a lot of work.
8. Understanding management systems and processes. Range 2-4. Median=3. 59% ranked average to needs more work.
9. Utilizing effective methods to motivate and facilitate implementation of a communication strategy within the organization. Range 1-4. Median=3. 73% ranked average to needs more work.
10. Which of the following best describes you right now?
__7__a. I am considering the use of new information on communication and a change in my communication strategy.
__10__b. I feel positive about making a change in my communication strategy.
__3__c. I believe that a change in my current communication strategy is the best approach.
__8__d. I am going to try new communication skills after I learn a few things.
11. How important is information on improving communication to you and your practice?

- 0 a. Not important
- 3 b. Somewhat important
- 19 c. Very important (86%)

12. How committed are you, at this point, to using the information you will learn about communication?

- 0 a. Not committed
- 5 b. Somewhat committed
- 17 c. Very committed (77%)

13. How confident are you that you have the skills/know how to implement an animal health care change on the dairy?

- 1 a. Not confident
- 13 b. Somewhat confident
- 8 c. Very confident (36%)

From the pre-assessment, we can conclude that more than half of the participants ranked themselves as average or lower with regards to the communication within the dairy business. Most were at least considering a change in their communication strategy, felt the information was important, committed to using the new information and somewhat confident they could implement an animal healthcare change on a dairy.

Post-program assessment (Thirty-one clickers were in use, but not everyone answered every question.)

1. Which of the following best describes you right now?

- 7 a. I am considering the use of new information on communication and a change in my communication strategy.
- 3 b. I feel positive about making a change in my communication strategy.
- 1 c. I believe that a change in my current communication strategy is the best approach.
- 19 d. I am going to try new communication skills after I learn a few things. (61%)

2. How important is information on improving communication to you and your practice?

- 0 a. Not important
- 5 b. Somewhat important
- 24 c. Very important (83%)

3. How committed are you, at this point, to using the information you will learn about communication?

- 0 a. Not committed
- 14 b. Somewhat committed
- 16 c. Very committed (53%)

4. How confident are you that you have the skills/know how to implement an animal health care change on the dairy?

- 0 a. Not confident
- 18 b. Somewhat confident
- 12 c. Very confident (40%)

5. Please rate your level of interest in a more in-depth CE program on communication, complete with practice cases and coaching.

4 a. Not interested

 15 b. Might consider it

 10 c. Very likely to attend (34%)

Communication Evaluation questions from Course Evaluation

All Agreed (43%) or Strongly Agreed (57%) with the statement “As a result of this course I better understand barriers to effective communication.”

Most (89%) Agreed or Strongly agreed with the statement “As a result of this course I am confident I can evaluate dairy business communication structure.” Three individuals disagreed with this statement.