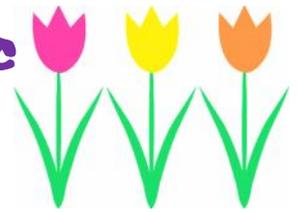
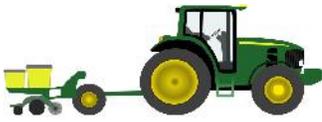


# Countryside Veterinary Clinic

## May 2016 Newsletter



As many farms are initialing treating their “off feed cows” we thought it would be a good idea to review a basic protocol for performing a physical exam. The goal of a complete physical exam is to determine a likely diagnosis and treat appropriately. Treating for every possible disease (shot gun therapy) is expensive, time consuming and may result in needless milk and meat antibiotic withdrawals. This article written by Dr. Mark Thomas was initially included in our January 2014 newsletter but remains very relevant today.



## Back To Basics- The Physical Exam

Mark J. Thomas, DVM

For both physicians and veterinarians the physical examination is the fundamental set of skills necessary to make a diagnosis. Some aspects of the exam are objective such as the cow’s temperature or the presence of ketones in the urine. Other things such as lung sounds or rectal palpation are more subjective and can require more skill and experience to detect abnormalities. On many dairies I often find certain diseases or conditions going unrecognized because a complete exam was not done. Remember that “if we don’t look for it, we won’t find it”. I also often hear comments like: “she can’t have a DA because she is not ketotic”. But if you don’t ping her for a DA, you won’t know. A common saying is that “every cow does not read the book”. This means that in most cases of DA, for example, the cow is ketotic. But not every case. Don’t forget to do a complete physical. Let’s review it!

First you need to have the proper equipment. A thermometer, stethoscope, urine or blood ketone strips/meter, CMT paddle and solution rectal sleeves and clean warm water with disinfectant scrub/soap should all be handy. You have obviously determined that this cow needs an exam, so likely you have already made some general observations on how she looks. Are her eyes sunken, is she lame, does she have an abnormal discharge, etc.?

Next start your hand-on exam. Try to do your exam the same way each time so you don’t forget to examine a certain system. (Lee Kraeger) You will not become an expert overnight and there are many skills within the exam that require further training and practice but we are trying to diagnosis and treat the common conditions we see each day. When you can’t find an explanation for why the cow is sick or your diagnosis is unclear, then it is time to have the veterinarian evaluate the cow.

1. Test for the presence of Ketones. Rub underneath the vulva or gently tug on cleanings to collect urine. Test urine for ketones using a urine test strip. If no urine is available then use the Precision blood meter test.
2. Take the temperature. Normal range is 101.5-102.5 degrees. Check the vulva for mucus membrane color (pale or white may indicate blood loss).
3. Examine milk from all quarters. You can also do a CMT test.
4. With your stethoscope, start on the cow’s left side:
  - Listen to the rumen, 2-3 contractions per minute is normal.
  - “Ping” the left side listening for the distinctive tin can sound indicating a left DA, rumen bloat or rumen void.
  - Listen to her heart and lungs.
  - Palpate her lymph nodes in front of her shoulder and in front of her hind leg.

Over ->

5. Move to the cow's right side:
  - "Ping" the right side to detect a right DA.
  - Listen to her heart and lungs.
  - Palpate her lymph nodes in front of her shoulder and in front of her hind leg.
6. Move to the front of the cow:
  - Feel her ears; are they cold to the touch? Indicating poor circulation i.e. milk fever in the fresh cow
  - Look at her eyes. Are they sunken? Indicating dehydration Are they blood shot? Indicating a severe problem such as toxemia or septicemia.
  - Look for a nasal discharge. Is it cloudy or clear?
  - Does her breath smell abnormal (sweet-ketosis, foul-lung abscess)
  - Is blood present in her nostrils? (possibly indicating a ruptured lung abscess)
7. Move behind the cow
  - If the cow is fresh and has not cleaned a vaginal exam is required.
  - Wash the vulva/perineum 3 times with disinfectant scrub and water.
  - Determine if cleanings are present, the nature of uterine fluid, is there an abnormal odor?
  - Perform a rectal exam to feel the uterus and rumen.
  - Examine the manure. Is it firm, scant and pasty, or diarrhea?
8. Examine the feet and legs
  - Is she lame? Lift the appropriate foot and look for a cause.
  - If the cow is lame and nothing can be found in the foot, the injury may be further up the leg or in the upper joints (stifle, hip).

Ask your veterinarian to review the hands-on physical exam at their next visit. Remember that after you determine why the cow is sick, you must administer the appropriate treatment. This may be a great time to review treatment protocols if they have not been updated in a while. Again, you will not become an expert overnight but if you don't look for it, you won't find it.

## **2016 Lewis County Rabies Clinics – only one left!**

**Wednesday - May 18<sup>th</sup> at**

**Lowville Town Barn from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

**All cats should be in carriers or confined in pillowcases. Dogs must be on a leash.**



## **Lewis County Fair: July 19 – 23, 2016**

[www.lewiscountyfair.org](http://www.lewiscountyfair.org)

**Reminder** - If you're planning to exhibit livestock at county fairs this summer now is the time to have health papers prepared. As specific vaccination and testing requirements must be met, please schedule an appointment with your herd veterinarian as soon as possible.

**Read our newsletters:** Remember that if you spot your name in our newsletter and call us within 5 days of the billing date, we will give you a \$10.00 credit on your bill.