



Hardware disease is much less prevalent today than it was 40 years ago. Much of this is thanks to magnets on choppers, the disappearance of wooden bunks that were nailed together, and less use of electric fencing held on insulators with little metal wire clips. These wire clips would break and fall into the little strip of green below the fence that cattle always were reaching for with their tongues. These clips were the number one cause of cows I got to necropsy that died of hardware. But today, there's something of a similar threat I see in feed bunks. It's plastic. It won't puncture the stomach, but it will wad up and slow the rumen emptying or slide part way down the intestine and block up the gut. It will never break down, and it doesn't get burped back up. If the plastic is small pieces of twine or feed bag it will pass through, but if it's a big enough piece the plastic is in the rumen for good. It is next to impossible for a veterinarian to diagnose plastic contributing to a poor doing animal, we don't have MRI equipment. I wonder how many animals that just don't eat well are suffering from plastic twine ingestion. I think it's a mistake to assume that twine and feed bags are inert. They are an animal health risk.

### Sharps Disposal

**Sharps containers:** If you need to dispose of sharps containers, we are able to send sharps containers filled with sharps (for a fee) back to a disposal company. However, they will not take the big two foot high containers that Elanco used for BST sharps. There are still a lot of those huge containers floating around and unfortunately they need to be opened and dumped into small containers if you want us to help with disposal. Along the same lines, only put sharps in sharps containers. Don't put broken bottles, syringes and McDonalds wrappers in them.

Fall army worm invades China: I'm only familiar with the spring army worm that came out of my marsh and decimated my corn several rows into the field. But there is a fall army worm that is native to Mexico and South America. This bugger does some damage further north but it can't over winter in low temperatures, the moth has to fly north during the summer to cause damage in Wisconsin. (There are a lot of really nasty pests that make our winters a good thing.) The caveat is that as we get nasty invasive bugs and weeds like Kudzu and emerald ash borer, so too are we exporting nasty bugs. Africa and the middle east have been fighting hoards of fall army worms and now it has moved to China. Nothing kills it on foreign soil, it just keeps eating everything it can. It is so nasty it is actually a cannibal and eats other army worms. Is this some CIA plot?

An article in the January 'Beef' magazine points out that the best time to castrate a bull calf is young. Most people make it a point, and it works really well in the first weeks of a bull's life because it's easier on the operator and there is less stress on the calf. But it makes financial sense as well. Larger bulls lose weight after castration and studies show that young castrated animals net gain to market is higher than bulls castrated at 500 pounds. Also at Kansas State feed yards, the death rate of bulls castrated at 500 pounds at the yard for stocker animals was three times as high as early castrates or uncastrated animals. I saw this first hand in Lodi during the fall of 1977. We castrated 400 weight cattle coming into a feed yard right off the truck. Half were heifers and half bulls. We lost a pile of animals to pneumonia in the intervening weeks and every single dead animal was a steer.

With the increased pressure on dairy farms to reduce costs and bankers asking our clients to target their veterinary bill Cass recently broke out 12 client's veterinary expenses to compare. The farms ranged from 300 to well over 2000 cows. The farms all purchased the majority of their medications and vaccines from our clinic drop ship programs. There is some variation in products because some clients drop ship milker's gloves and other non-medication products that are included in the medication numbers but it's probably not significant. There is also inherent variability if caused by producers having heifers raised off site.

The three categories listed in the following chart are Veterinary services, including call charges, time, and any surgery. Medications are all drop shipped products, product picked up at the office, and product that comes off a veterinary truck, whether used by a veterinarian or dispensed when the veterinarian is on the farm. Lab is all lab charges in our clinic, both blood and milk lab, and all diagnostic testing sent to Universities or the Marshfield lab. Feed sample testing and nutrition charges are removed.

The totals are after the 20% discount is removed, so the numbers represent the actual money spent by the farms.

Drug Costs/Cow	Services Cost/Cow	Lab Costs/Cow	Overall Animal Health Cost/Cow (excl. Nutrition)
\$ 72.14	\$ 31.16	\$ 0.17	\$ 103.47
\$ 74.39	\$ 30.36	\$ -	\$ 104.74
\$ 72.18	\$ 29.24	\$ 8.02	\$ 109.44
\$ 66.14	\$ 37.77	\$ 8.03	\$ 111.94
\$ 87.18	\$ 38.74	\$ 3.18	\$ 129.11
\$ 108.73	\$ 31.48	\$ 1.10	\$ 141.32
\$ 75.15	\$ 87.42	\$ 2.59	\$ 165.16
\$ 117.28	\$ 43.76	\$ 7.78	\$ 168.83
\$ 115.48	\$ 53.91	\$ 1.95	\$ 171.33
\$ 161.69	\$ 34.90	\$ 6.58	\$ 203.18
\$ 165.16	\$ 38.63	\$ 3.51	\$ 207.30
\$ 142.73	\$ 73.44	\$ 1.39	\$ 217.56
<b>\$ 104.86</b>	<b>\$ 44.23</b>	<b>\$ 3.69</b>	<b>\$ 152.78 AVERAGE</b>

\*\* If clients are interested in reviewing costs with their herd veterinarian, we can personalize a report for your farm.

This is a link to an article featuring Gary Sipiorski discussing farm success going forward and it contains 8 rules. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.wisfarmer.com/amp/2448069002>