The Editor

Don't wait till the last minute.

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> All things bright and beautiful,
> All creatures great and small,
> All things wise and wonderful,
> The Lord God made them all.
> — Mrs. Cecil Alexander, 1848
> *Hymns for Little Children*

I fell in love with that stanza and the books that made me aware of them in junior high, or maybe even before. Under the pen name James Herriot, James Alfred Wight related stories of his experiences as a country veterinarian in Yorkshire, England.

Two favorites I can recall offhand include the story of "rehoming" a dog with a gastrointestinal problem with a man who had no sense of smell, and a story about the sheep he thought he put to sleep only to find, after a few days knocked out, it fully recovered.

Of course the books go into much more detail about each case. Striking are the relationships the veterinarian develops with both the patients and the owners. Like the Hallmark recipe for love stories, each case (or at least the ones worth sharing) presented a challenge overcome by building a relationship with the patient or its owner that gave greater understanding to the situation. Greater understanding revealed the true problem and helped in discovering a solution.

Close to home

I think back to a trip home from Minnesota with our beloved Husker (an American Eskimo dog), who continued to get more and more distressed during the six-hour trip. Our veterinarian was waiting for us at the clinic as we came into Saint Joseph (hopefully on the pm side of midnight). He patiently listened with that dumbfounded look no pet owner wants to see as we described how Husker was behaving and why, by that time, we were distressed.

I can still remember in desperation admitting that Husker kept rolling over on his back asking me to rub his tummy like the problem was there. Lights turned on. Doc went into action to alleviate an intestinal blockage. Soon, while not extremely happy with Doc, Husker was relieved and feeling more comfortable.

Without a strong relationship with our veterinarian, who thoroughly understood us and our relationship with our dog, we wouldn't have had the midnight appointment, he might not have taken my insights about Husker's behavior as important, and Husker might not have had the positive outcome he did.

Form the relationship

If you own cattle, I'd lay odds you have called the local veterinarian out in a crisis — maybe to let air out of a steer, to help a cow calve or to figure out why three weaned calves died last week. Once the matter is beyond your expertise, or once *you admit* the matter is beyond your expertise, it's time to call Doc, right? You are, after all, a pretty darn good cattleman.

It's less likely that you sit down with your veterinarian on an annual basis to review last year's animal performance and plan out next year's herd health calendar.

Don't make your veterinarian play catch-up. It's time to develop that veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) to help your veterinarian help you design a herd health program focused on prevention rather than treatment.

As detailed in "Rx Only" on page 92, you'll soon need that relationship to get access to what have been common do-it-yourself treatments. The last remaining antibiotics available over the counter will shift to prescription only in June.

Eric Moore of Norbrook shared details about that shift and the benefits of utilizing a VCPR in our Feb. 15 *Angus At Work* podcast. It's my first published podcast interview, so give it a listen and give me some feedback. **ABB**