

Health Records and Show Reports – Part 2

Denise Talbott, DVM

In continuing with our topic of record keeping in the caviary, we will now look at information pertaining to medical records and then lastly show reports which the fancier may wish to keep track of.

Medical Records

If you have enough covies for long enough, you will have illnesses crop up which need to be tended to for compassionate as well as herd health reasons. We have already discussed birth and death records and keeping track of issues with those, and ascribing reasons for demise in the latter case.

What folks may want to do is to define a problem, note down observations and then track the treatment of the animal. This will help you decide how to address a problem in the future. I'll give you an example of two sibling boars who both developed cervical lumps probably from some thorny hay. I decided to treat one conservatively (watchful waiting) and to be proactive on the other animal.

	Initial signs of lump	Course of action (treatment)	Resolution of Lump
Boar 954	Date 9-9-09	no treatment	Date 10-8-09
Boar 955	Date 9-9-09	numb/lance/sulfa	Date 10-8-09

What did I learn? Well it doesn't (at least in my hands) make much difference in how you treat your cervical lumps; they may very well go away in the same period of time and that they last about 4-6 weeks. So when you check your pig after a week and the lump is still there, don't get excited. Naturally if you have a sample size of 100 pigs with this condition you may make a different conclusion. However, without documentation, it is hard to make an accurate assessment, or at least a logical assessment of how to proceed.

Cystitis is another example of paying attention to how long it takes to resolve the problem and then how fast the problem recurs if it does. A cystitis that never seems to resolve or recurs within days of stopping treatment may lead you to think about other reasons for bladder irritation like bladder stones.

I think you understand my point in how record keeping on disease processes can be important. There are two other medically related but not necessarily pathologic things to keep track of. One is your external pest control practices. Most of us now use something to prevent/control/treat mite infestations in our animals. I am not so much concerned with your philosophical practices of doing it only when you "see" mites versus if you do it on a preventative basis as much as I am with you recording what you use and when you use it. An example: A fellow fancier contacted me about a probable mite infestation in her herd. She had been treating it sporadically with ivermectin, one dose about every six

weeks or so. And nothing was getting better. In fact, the situation seemed to be getting worse and she had even lost one animal to the extreme mutilation the animal self inflicted due to the itching. With the history she gave me of what she used, how she used it and what an appropriate therapy regimen should be, we were able to resolve the crisis in her small herd. Her assumption was that the ivermectin wasn't cutting it or that it wasn't really even mites. My belief was that her treatment regimen was not timed in a manner conducive to elimination of the mites. So simply knowing what you use and when you use it in terms of mite control is important, whether in prevention or treatment.

The other thing that I think is medically related but maybe not just to pathology is weight. Naturally we want to see our animals reach Sr weight when they should. Some fanciers weigh their animals every time they clean their cages (what dedication!). I confess that I don't keep all that much track of weight except to make sure they reach their milestones according to age. There are a few instances though where we should be very particular about weights. Keep track of the weights on babies that are being hand-reared. That allows you to know if you are meeting their nutritional needs or not. Maybe you need to add a feeding or two. Gastric emptying time in pigs is two hours. So maybe feeding every three to four hours isn't cutting it. Maybe you need to increase the amount you are feeding them at each feeding. Whatever choice you make, the important fact is that you want them to be gaining ground every day. It is extremely easy to see them running around and to slack off on your feeding schedule only to find them slipping backwards. Another time that weight is important is in sows near term. Occasionally I will have a sow who in the last week or two of pregnancy is still eating, but not as good as I would like, and the pups don't seem to be growing all that much. Weighing the sow consecutively may help determine whether I think she is pre-toxic or that something is going on with the litter. Those sows I am much more likely to induce- not based on one point in time, but following the animal over the course of a week. Lastly, animals need to be weighed near the end of their lifespan. Sometimes we find animals simply dead in our caviaries, but generally we can see a pattern of slowing down, losing weight and general decline. Weighing these animals may let us know when to start looking at premolars, when to start paying closer attention to feed and water consumption, and at the end, when a humane euthanasia is in order.

Show Records

Keep them. Many clubs are now going to shows with no comment cards unless requested. In our area, a lot of that has to do with the fact that many times there are not enough exhibitors to write for two ongoing shows and to put their animals up on the table. It has simply become a time saving effort not do the cards. If you ever have a dispute about sweepstakes points, what shows you actually went to, getting a BIS certificate from ARBA, you will need them. In the event that you ever decide to wish to become a Master Breeder, your awards will need to come from sanctioned shows, and copies of your show reports (or legs) submitted.

As an addendum, I know that some folks keep detailed financial records of money flowing in and out of the caviary. Personally, I know which way the money flows in mine and I hate to think about it too much ☺.

Heads Up

The next report I am considering will be titled OH WHAT A BOAR, dealing with issues concerning boars' anatomical and disease issues. It will be a tasteful article but due to the nature of the topic, you may wish to "vet" it before you allow your children to read it. Most kids in the fancy know how to sex boars and sows and know what is going on, but be forewarned that a frank discussion will be taking place.

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