Using Veterinary Opinions to Establish a 'Best Clinical Practice Guideline' for a Bovine Uterine Prolapse

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Hypothesis: The Delphi consensus technique used to analyse veterinary opinions and a comparison of those findings with the existing literature can be used to establish a valuable ‘best clinical practice guideline’ for bovine practitioners on how to manage a bovine uterine prolapse.

Evidence based veterinary medicine is used to base clinical practice on scientific evidence. This evidence can exist at many different levels. Given the paucity of clinical research studies in bovine medicine, analysing veterinary opinions can be a useful tool for producing clinical guidelines. There is a wealth of experience present in the field that we can easily tap into. In cattle practice, the management of a bovine uterine prolapse can vary considerably. This study provides information for veterinarians to base their current practice upon.

Materials and methods: An online survey collected information on veterinary opinions on the management of a bovine uterine prolapse and included the sections ‘Management’, ‘Medicines and Procedures’, and ‘Aftercare and Prognosis’. Veterinarians with any experience in treating a bovine uterine prolapse were asked to participate. A second, more in depth questionnaire was developed focussing on contentious areas and 10 expert panel members were selected to participate in this 2nd round. A 3rd round consisted of a concept clinical guideline and was send for review by the same expert panel.

Results: Within 3 months, 692 respondents from 46 different countries participated in the survey. The estimated amount of uterine prolapse cases the respondents had encountered in their professional career ranged from 3 to 2000. Techniques between practitioners varied significantly and many different reasons existed for choosing to perform a particular aspect of treatment. For example, 59% of respondents always placed vaginal sutures post replacement, while 19% never placed vaginal sutures. Sixteen percent of respondents mentioned to place these sutures due to client pressure. In the following rounds the expert panel gained consensus on all but one issue which led to the development of a clinical guideline.

Conclusions: The initial survey generated many positive comments from respondents indicating a demand for this type of field research. The interest and need for clinical guidelines was evident, concluded from the wide variety of treatment methods described by respondents. The Delphi consensus technique demonstrated to be useful for this purpose.