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WISCONSIN BANKERS' FARM BULLETIN

How to Care for Sick Animals

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How to Care for Sick Animals

Why wait until animals get sick before preparing to care for them? Even a short delay may do away with chances of recovery. If the following suggestions as to the care of sick animals are put in practice, losses will be fewer and recoveries more rapid.

SECURE ABLE ATTENDANT

A competent attendant will first prevent the sick animals from seriously injuring themselves, and seek to give constant attendance when attacks of acute pain occur. He will also see that the skin is carefully groomed. Grooming keeps the pores of the skin from clogging with dandruff and dust and assists it in maintaining a constant internal temperature of the body. The curry comb and bristle brush are necessary for proper grooming; the former should be used lightly on sick animals, but the latter vigorously. When combined with vigorous rubbing, grooming stimulates the circulation of blood over the entire surface of the body.

FURNISH GOOD QUARTERS

For large animals, such as the horse and cow, a box stall, 12 x 12 or 14 x 14 feet and free from draughts, should be available for their treatment when sick. The walls of the stall should be kept white-washed, and the floor clean and dry with straw, sawdust, shavings or other loose bedding. Soiled bedding and droppings must be removed promptly for cleanliness is essential in the care of both sick and healthy live stock.

When possible, remove all the bedding from the stall and dry it in the sun each day. An enclosed stall is best for most cases and necessary for nervous animals, as by it they may be shut away from noises and other annoyances, and the windows may be darkened. Moreover, any disease-producing germs that may be given off by sick animals are more easily destroyed and kept from spreading through the stable when a closed box stall is available for animals suffering from infectious diseases.

The temperature of the stall should be about 50 degrees in winter and as cool as possible in summer. Before being used for another animal the stall should be thoroughly disinfected with a reliable coal-tar disinfectant prepared according to the directions on the original package.

PROVIDE SUITABLE PROTECTION

Blankets to protect against cold and dampness are an essential part of the hospital equipment. Medium weight wool blankets are best for use in the sick stall as too heavy covering hinders the skin from performing its work. These should be removed and sun-dried whenever they become damp. Light cotton sheets are more suitable for summer use and afford protection from attacks by flies. Bandages support the legs and materially assist in keeping them warm and also from stocking. Those made of flannel are preferable, although woven cotton bandages have the advantage of being very elastic. Bandages should be changed at least twice daily and at each change the legs given a thorough hand-rubbing to stimulate the circulation of the blood. The application of a milk liniment composed of equal parts of alcohol and witch hazel will be found beneficial at this time. Care must be taken when applying bandages to keep them from wrinkling and to roll them from below upward so as not to impede the flow of blood in the veins.

FEED PROPER FOOD

Only sound, easily digested food should be given the sick animal. It should be fed in small quantities but at frequent intervals. Any that is refused should be removed promptly to avoid its becoming tainted or fermented from the action of saliva. As the appetite is a reliable indication of the requirements of the body, it ought to be catered to and watched. While it is unwise to force food on an animal "off feed," those suffering from debilitating diseases should be tempted with appetizing food. Green feeds aid the bowels and liver in their work of eliminating body wastes. When the latter accumulate they cause constipation, depression, and fever. The most suitable foods for sick animals are green grass, roots, and bran mashes. A little common salt is helpful in stimulating the appetite and increasing the palatability of the food. It also aids in the important processes of digestion, absorption, and nutrition.

SUPPLY PURE WATER

Fresh water should be kept constantly within reach, as it is important in washing poisons out of the body. It is also essential in aiding digestion. A feverish patient will rinse out its mouth frequently if a pail of fresh water is near. Little water should be allowed animals

with diarrhea. In winter it is good practice to warm the drinking water. Under no circumstances give ice-cold water to sick animals. Most animals can be trusted to drink all the water they want without harm, provided they are not overheated. A separate watering pail should be kept for use in the sick stall to prevent contagious diseases from spreading to other animals in the stable.

GIVE DAILY EXERCISE

No one thing is more valuable than exercise. It causes free circulation of the blood through all parts of the body. It should always be moderate but given daily unless the patient is suffering from a disease accompanied with high fever, when better results will be had from absolute rest. Exercise in a small yard or at the halter gives an opportunity for the animal to get a supply of fresh air at the same time. Denied exercise, even the most robust animal sooner or later loses health.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS OF VETERINARIAN

Now that a graduate veterinarian is within call of most farms, he should, as a rule, be consulted whenever an animal gets sick. His directions should be followed closely, otherwise the prescribed treatment is likely to fail, for medicines are dependent upon proper care and are incapable of accomplishing a cure when not supported by the things outlined in the foregoing paragraphs. Remember that even a slight change for the worse may forerun serious trouble, so should be reported promptly to the attending veterinarian. He will often find it desirable to change the medicine or prescribe additional drugs for the support of the animal.

SUMMARY

The essential points mentioned above may be summarized by stating that the animal mechanism must be given intelligent care, good quarters, suitable protection, proper food, pure drink, and daily exercise to be in the best condition to ward off and recover from disease.