

PIPESTONE

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*“...Critical thinking
is concerned with
reason, intellectual
honesty, and
open-mindedness...”*

Delivering Genetic Excellence...
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Do Your Part: Encourage Clear Thinking Concerning Antibiotics

By G.F. “Doc” Kennedy, DVM, 507-215-0487

By developing critical-thinking skills we learn to evaluate information for ourselves—an invaluable ability. When we encourage others to develop their own critical thinking abilities, aren't we giving them a gift? A gift that keeps on giving.

A bright guy once wrote, “...Critical thinking is concerned with reason, intellectual honesty, and open-mindedness...” I say let's have more of that—reason, honesty, and open-mindedness regarding antibiotics in agriculture!

Something I read recently offered a set of questions and supporting information¹ you might use when discussing the issue with people outside our industry. These questions are intended to spark critical thinking and open the window to an open-minded review of current research. I'm condensing the supporting data for you here; if you have use for the in-depth version let me know.

Critical-Thinking Question 1: What if it was actually organic production that increased bacterial contamination in our food supply?

- In a 2008 study, Ohio State University researchers identified salmonella in

54% of hogs raised without antibiotics and only 39% of hogs raised by more typical methods. Antibiotic-free pigs also tested higher for toxoplasma (a microscopic parasite) and trichinella.

- A soon-to-be published Iowa State University study will show how therapeutic levels of chlortetracycline or tylosin kept E. coli from colonizing in pigs.

Critical-Thinking Question 2: Hasn't antibiotic use in human medicine been the principal source of antibiotic resistance?

- MRSA (methicillin-resistant staph. aureus) cases are declining since hospitals and clinics (by the way, those are the places where 85% of cases occur—not hog barns) have changed the way they disinfect against it and manage it.
- A recent review of drug-resistance cases worldwide shows that countries where veterinary antibiotics are seldom used still have about the same incidence of antibiotic resistance as countries where animal health products are in use.

Continued on page 2

BUSINESS SHORT COURSE: Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics

BRINGING THE PICTURE INTO FOCUS

Can you see the future? Is your vision fuzzy or sharp? A plan for your operation—sometimes called a strategic plan and in writing—doesn't have to be MBA-level stuff. You can do this yourself...so long as you understand the need for objectives, strategies, and tactics and know the difference between those terms.

Assuming you already know where your operation stands right now, start with objectives. Those are statements that describe where you hope to see yourself in a year, in five years, in 10 years. You can draw a line in the sand that marks your starting point with your fiscal-year start, your financial-year start (the day you typically sit in your lender's chair and sweat), or a start date that coincides with a long-term relationship, such as a contract.

Let's say today is the day. Look toward to where you and your stakeholders (that's business talk for the people whose future is riding on your success) want to be in a year. Even if your one-year objective is "be right where we are now" that's still going to take some strategizing. You may choose to stand still, yet the world will reach in and

tug at your operation. Grain prices will go up or down. Pig values will rise or fall. And to achieve that simple goal of staying afloat in your pond, you'll need at least one strategy—dog paddle or back-float?

If your goal is more ambitious—say you want to increase revenue from your swine operation—you'll need to outline ways to make that happen. Those will be your strategies and tactics.

Strategies after goal setting

Let's formalize a goal. "Increase revenue from my swine operation by X% in two years." And let's say you decide marketing is the element holding you back from that objective.

Now create a strategy to support your objective. Call it "Become a more effective marketer." Marketing is the sort of thing many of us will put off because we have a lot to do this minute and the next. You meet deadlines every time you breed your sows. The calendar is your friend because

Encourage Clear Thinking Concerning Antibiotics Continued from page 1

Critical-Thinking Question 3: If so-called "growth-promoters" actually reduced bacterial resistance, wouldn't that be a good thing?

- First of all, "growth promotion" is a term and a method from the past, says Randall Singer, PhD, DVM, at the University of Minnesota. He suggests low-level use of some familiar antibiotics may work to protect an animal's gut from new threats. A high dose of a new-generation antibiotic could wipe out all bacteria in the gut—helpful strains along with the harmful. His work indicates growth promotion levels of antibiotics stabilize bacterial populations to prevent infections.

Critical-Thinking Question 4: Does the data point to increased antibiotic resistance in the U.S.?

- The U.S. National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) shows that the instance of salmonella and other pathogens have declined or remained stable in the United States for more than a decade—even though low-level farm antibiotic use remains legal.

Meanwhile, in Europe after 10 years of bans on low-level farm antibiotics there has been no measurable human health benefit.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) actually blames the European ban for the increase in resistant salmonella. In Denmark, antibiotic-resistant campylobacter incidence increased in data covering 1997 through 2008.

You can find more questions and answers at a website called *AntibioticTruths.com*. Once you inform yourself, I think the next most important thing you can do is encourage people you know to do a little critical thinking on this topic. Listen to your friends' opinions but then ask them to keep an open mind and hear some surprising findings from your side of the street. ●

1 Source: For the Record, a publication sponsored by a grant from ALPHARAMA Animal Health, 2010.

it tells you when a task must begin if you expect an outcome at a future date. Choosing a date to start working on your new objective means you're more likely to achieve it.

Forcing yourself to learn about and practice the steps of marketing will require a deadline. With time factored in, your new strategy will read, "Become a more effective marketer by December 1, 2011."

Once you know what and when, decide how

Your new strategy needs some tactics. If marketing knowledge and skills are the objective and you know when you need to begin working toward that goal (the deadline) what steps can you take to make it happen?

Maybe you should take a class or sit down with an expert. A tactic could be: "Set up an appointment to discuss marketing techniques with Joe the second week in January 2011." Tactics are short-term actions to achieve specific results.

(Maybe Joe is a great resource and a good teacher. Maybe not. It would be smart to have another possible tactic up your sleeve. You've seen those news stories in which Company A decides to grow by purchasing its main competitor—Company B. But that tactic fails. Does Company A close its doors? Nope, it tries to find another way to compete. Another tactic.)

Tactics are repeatable, too. Say a revenue-increasing tactic is "save more pigs from every sow through employee training." You'll doubtless need to repeat that tactic every time you hire someone new.

Start thinking in business terms and soon you're seeing your operation more clearly. **Objectives are right there on your horizon, strategies give you the gunsight for measuring your distance from those hopes, and tactics are your finger on the trigger. ●**

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We have our booths reserved and our travel plans made. It's not too early to arrange your schedule to see us at the winter trade shows.

Lights, Camera, It's the South Dakota Pork Congress! Stop by to see us at the Ramkota Convention Center Thursday, January 6 and Friday, January 7, 2011 in Sioux Falls.

Ready for Your Close-up at the Minnesota Pork Congress? We'll be there Wednesday and Thursday, January 19 and 20, 2011 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Spotlight on the Iowa Pork Congress, January 26 and 27, 2011 (that's Wednesday and Thursday) at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines.

So we can all enjoy time with family and friends we've arranged this special schedule:

Thursday, December 23 – deliveries to both Thursday and Friday routes.

Thursday, December 30 – deliveries to both Thursday and Friday routes.

No deliveries on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

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