United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Veterinary
Services

Information Sources for Beef Cow/Calf Producers

National Animal Health Monitoring System

Figure 1

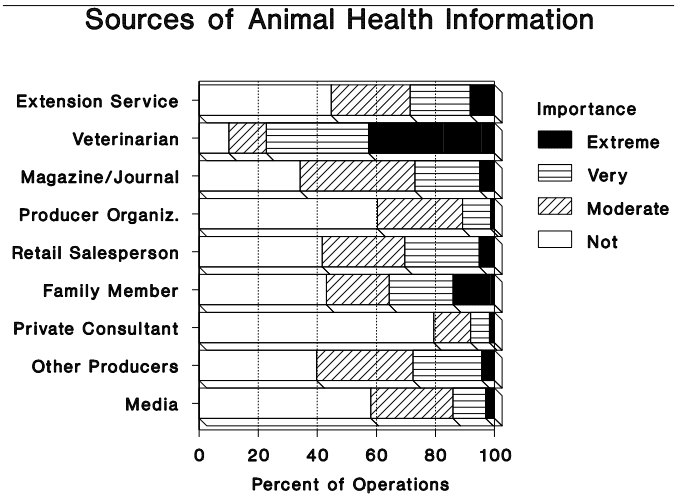
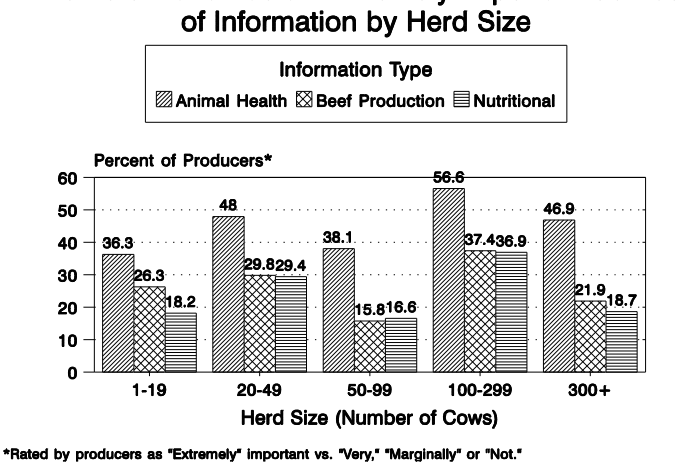


Figure 2



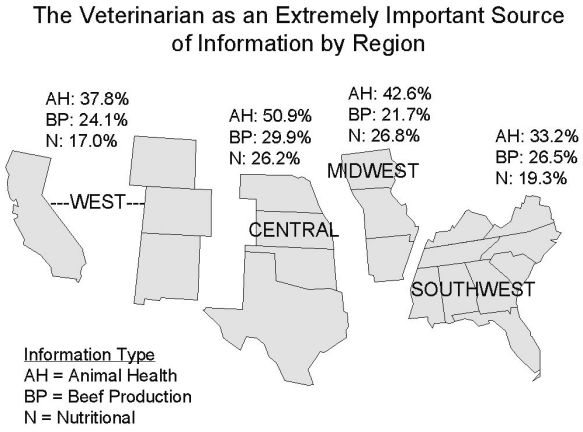
Cow/calf producers consider veterinarians their most important off-farm source of information on animal health, beef production, and nutrition, according to a recent study by the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS). Seven hundred and ninety-nine (799) randomly selected cow/calf producers were asked about information sources as part of the NAHMS Beef Cow/Calf Health and Productivity Audit (CHAPA). The 18 states involved in this part of CHAPA data collection represented 70 percent of the U.S. beef cow/calf operation.

Veterinarians were determined to be the most important source of **animal health** information in the swine and dairy industries in previous NAHMS studies. This was also found to be true for the cow/calf industry where 42.7 percent of producers classified practitioners as "extremely" important sources of animal health information (Figure 1). The next most popular source identified as extremely important was family members (14 percent).

Producers with herd sizes of 100 to 299 placed more importance on the veterinarian as a source of information (Figure 2). This trend was also true, for Cooperative Extension Service/ university personnel and publications; beef and agricultural journals, family, and other producers.

Regional results in Figure 3 show that producers in the central U.S. put more importance on veterinarians as an animal health information source than producers in other areas.

Figure 3

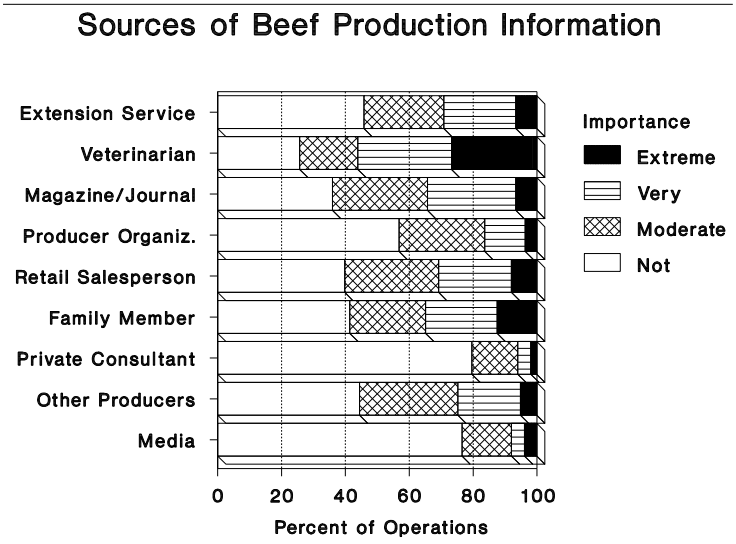


Target population: beef cow/calf producers with 5 or more beef cows and with 50 percent or more of 1992 calves born from January through June.

March 1994

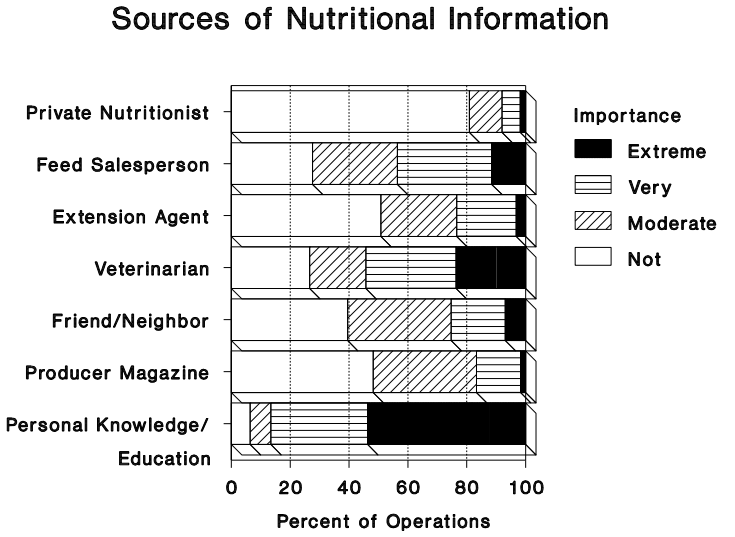
Figure 4 shows producers' top four sources of **beef production** information were veterinarians (26.8 percent), family (12.5 percent), Cooperative Extension Service/university (6.6 percent), and beef or agricultural magazines (6.6 percent). The larger the herd, the more importance was placed on nearly all sources of beef production information with the exception of retail salespeople. The only significant geographical variation was with the number of western region producers who placed higher importance on beef and agricultural magazines (12.8 percent identified them as an extremely important source compared to the next highest of 7.1 percent in the southeast region).

Figure 4



Personal knowledge and education were first as beef producers' most important source of **nutritional** information (Figure 5.) For off-farm sources, veterinarians were first (23.6 percent) and feed salesmen or retailers were next (11.5 percent). As herd size grew, producers placed more value on their own personal knowledge.

Figure 5



When asked if they had consulted an animal nutritionist in the last 12 months, 10.6 percent of the producers indicated that they had. Consultation with an animal nutritionist was more prevalent as operations got larger (1-19 head, 7.5 percent; 20-49 head, 8.6 percent; 50-99 head, 16.9 percent; 100-299 head, 16.3 percent; and 300+ head, 28 percent.)

In summary, veterinarians were viewed as valuable sources of beef production and nutrition information in addition to their traditional role as animal health professionals.

NAHMS collaborators included the National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA), State and Federal Veterinary Medical Officers, and the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (USDA:APHIS:VS).

Other CHAPA information is available on the following topics: Branding, Injection sites, Facilities, Calf health, and Reproductive efficiency. For more information, contact:

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