What Is the Real Cost of Your Ambulatory Equine Call?

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1. Introduction
This session is geared toward a thorough understanding of the underlying structure of practice fees with an emphasis toward educating the new graduate and a review for the mature practitioner or practice owner. The relevance of the topic is fundamental to all equine practitioners in the "new reality" economy and serves as a reminder of the importance for all staff personnel to have a thorough understanding of what practice time and resources are “worth” (costs analysis) in dollars and cents.

This session will provide an umbrella view of:

- Breakout costs of associate (salary, benefits etc).
- Breakout costs of ambulatory practice vehicle operation.
- Breakout costs of overhead support (scheduling/tech/inventory management/billing, etc).
- Breakout costs of equipment (DR, U/S, etc).
- Inventory markup discussion.

The umbrella view will provide “guesstimated” industry percentages for these components with a discussion of the source of the assumptions and how each practice can review their own practice numbers to customize the percentages to their practice finances. There will be an emphasis on the value of budgeting not only for cash flow purposes but also to support a valid and effective fee structure model versus “guesstimating” costs. Other financial tools utilized will be amortization of equipment and structure of compensation for all staff to support a return on investment (ROI), which in turn can support capitol purchases, practice growth, and owner transitions.

Three “routine” calls will demonstrate the value of this approach in fiscal terms; and the different efficiencies that can be realized, depending on the type of equine call based on a 1-hour billable scenario. Examples of possible call scenarios are:

1. Farm call with routine spring vaccinations, worming, and Coggins.
2. Farm call minutes with gas colic of short duration.
3. Farm call minutes with acute unilateral lameness exam and diagnosis.

The “Take Home Message” for the practitioner is a better understanding of the dynamics of fee structure and service delivery as it relates to physical, fiscal and human resources of the practice.

An added benefit to the analysis of an ambulatory call may also be a recognition of the need for soft-
ware which can accommodate the real costs of the call components and translate them to a billable invoice to provide the practice with a sustainable economic outcome.