



*Eric Knock*

- 37-years-old
- Tulare, S.D.
- Veterinarian and owner at Prairie View Vet Clinic

**Education:** South Dakota State University for animal science and Iowa State University for doctorate of veterinary medicine

**Background:** He grew up on a diversified farming operation near Willow Lake, S.D., where he was active in 4-H and FFA.

**Family:** Wife, Roxanne, and four children, Rylee, 9; RaeAnna, 7; Rielle, 4; and Roy, 2

**Vet Clinics:** Miller, Redfield, Highmore, Wessington Springs, South Dakota

**When is it time to call the vet:** Knock says producers should know their limitations as a producer and know when to seek help from their vet or nutritionist. He says, "Even vets for that matter, need to know when to ask for help and don't be afraid to ask for help."

**Mentors:** Dr. Fred Hubbard, who Knock worked for when he graduated and then bought the clinic from him. He also says there have been a lot of producers who have helped him learn different things along the way.

**Strangest Cases in Your Clinics:** De-scenting a skunk and examining a pet mouse that had a tumor

**Organizations:** South Dakota Veterinary Medical Association, Tulare United Church, South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, South Dakota Farm Bureau

# Call the **VET**

By Wendy Sweetner

When Eric Knock was getting ready to graduate from South Dakota State University in 2003, he realized returning to the family farm near Willow Lake, S.D., was probably not going to work.

Since he knew he always wanted to work with livestock, Knock was deciding between going to graduate school and going to veterinary school. Vet school won.

"While going to SDSU, it probably wasn't a good opportunity to return, the farm wasn't big enough to come right back to the farm after graduation. I looked into either graduate school or vet school. I don't really like writing or research all that well so decided vet school would be better," he says.

After finishing vet school at Iowa State University in 2007, he started working in Miller, S.D., with Dr. Fred Hubbard. Three years later, Knock purchased the clinic from the retiring Hubbard.

He and veterinarian April Schilder are co-owners of the business.

Since 2010, Knock says things have been kind of crazy. He and his wife, Roxanne, who is the staff nutritionist with Dakotaland Feeds, hired an associate shortly after buying the clinic.

They bought the vet clinic portion of the feed store in Redfield, S.D., next. The veterinarian running that clinic had retired quite a few years before and his children were running the feed store portion of that business when the Knocks bought the vet clinic.

Then in Highmore, S.D., they bought a building and started a clinic there. They bought the building in Wessington Springs, S.D., a little over a year ago that had housed a vet clinic previously but had been sitting empty for a while.

In Miller and Wessington Springs, producers can bring livestock in for service. In Highmore and Redfield, vet supplies are available. They do small animal work at all locations.

Knock and the four other veterinarians try to split up which location they work out of but they all move around anyway. Knock and another vet mostly work out of the Miller clinic.

Buying multiple clinics and hiring veterinarians has helped meet the need for livestock veterinary care in central South Dakota.

"It just seemed like there was a need. We actually had some clients that we had done some work for in some of those areas ask when we were going to open a clinic there express that they would be interested in service closer," Knock says. "There appeared to be a good business opportunity for us to do that. It has worked out really well."

Knock notes there are less cattle in the area now than there were 10-15 years ago, but they have still been able to expand because of additional services they provide. They offer

embryo transfer, custom AI'ing, ultrasounding, pregnancy testing and fetal sexing. One of their vets specializes in chiropractic and acupuncture.

"Three out of the four vets that are here right now besides me came here right out of vet school. A lot of the stuff that we do we just developed along the way," he says.

Knock says most of the work they do is within 40-50 miles of any of their clinics. However, he does

some carcass ultrasounding in different places further away. Their newest vet travels to the bull stud in Gordon, Neb., about once a month to do some chiropractic and acupuncture work.

Knock enjoys getting to know their clients.

"What I like best about my work would be getting to work with farmers and ranchers and their families on their operations every day," he says.

Knock says they learned some business techniques while in vet school, but he was not ready for everything that came their way.

"They did have some business classes, but not enough to completely prepare anybody. There's probably no way to completely prepare anybody for this," Knock says. "There were some things that helped with the foundational pieces, but much of it has been learning by trial and error and talking to other people and learning from other people."

Knock sees a good future for large animal veterinarians.

"There's definitely reason to be optimistic because there are many job openings available. We always need more. What large animal vets are doing is changing a little bit all the time just like ag producers. It's not an easy job but it can definitely be very rewarding."

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