

# The Virtue of Patience



By Darren Zimmerman, D.V.M.

*Dr. Darren Zimmerman has recently joined the Crystal Creek® team and is further advancing his veterinary skills through an additional knowledge of animal nutrition. Crystal Creek® is excited to be working with Dr. Zimmerman as he becomes more familiar with the Crystal Creek® sustainable approach to livestock nutrition.*

*“Patience is not the ability to wait, but the ability to keep a good attitude while waiting.” - Unknown*

When I was first out of vet school, I felt that I had all the knowledge and energy in the world. Unfortunately, clients saw a green, untested kid with a lot of “new” ideas. I quickly learned that “teaching an old dog new tricks” requires patience and persistence; and, if there is one thing farmers know, it’s persistence. Farmers can be a stubborn lot (I say this as someone who married a farmer and is, himself, a farmer). Changing their minds and ways of doing things requires a lot of patience and persistence. Patience can be hard to come by, especially when you have all the knowledge and energy in the world to impart. So many times when something seemed simple and obvious to me, it was difficult to see things from their perspective. I needed to remember that they also had their knowledge and weren’t always looking to adapt and change their world. I learned the value of slow steps and gradual change.

Besides accepting gradual change, I also learned the value of listening and being open to someone else’s ideas. If everyone is telling you to change something, the common denominator in that equation is you. It can be hard to see, understand, and accept that; however, leading someone to that understanding, and seeing that change, is so worth the time and effort. I remember advising numerous clients on various issues, and their answer was often, “Everyone is telling me that”...yet they didn’t realize they were the thing that needed to change. Eventually, my attitude changed. Trying to force all your knowledge on someone is frustrating on both ends. Accepting that real, meaningful change cannot come overnight has been of tremendous value to me. Accepting that patience and persistence when teaching is the thing that leads to meaningful change made my life, and theirs, much better. Learning to



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*“The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not smashing it” - Arnold H. Glasow*

accept that fact with graciousness and gratitude took even longer, but was worth every minute.

Now all these years have passed, and I suddenly realize that I am one of those old dogs. I have chosen to pursue a new career path and there is so much to learn. I have indeed learned patience throughout the years, but a part of me still wants to know everything right now. Patience requires practice. I thought that practice was over and that I had it mastered. Now, I am experiencing challenges with my world changing. I am frustrated that things are so different when I thought I had it all figured out. I have to re-evaluate many of these things that have always worked for me. People I love and respect are telling me to be patient and I will be rewarded. I am slowly realizing the common denominator in the equation is me. I now see others being patient with me as they try to teach me all these new tricks. Also, understanding how things have come full circle in my life, I have discovered how important and difficult humility and gratitude can be. I am grateful to be given this new, exciting chance to learn new tricks from knowledgeable, patient people and clients. I am grateful they know real, meaningful change won't happen in me

overnight. I hope to be able to accept that fact soon, myself. Patience still requires practice. I am having to relearn that all over again. I guess being the common denominator can be hard. Math is hard!

I also know that a sense of humor to go along with the humility, can help change your life. I hope to still be able to provide fresh eyes and a different perspective to this new chapter. We all live in a “right now” world, and it can be difficult to maintain a good attitude about it. Accepting that this is not generally how the world has ever worked can be difficult. Adapting an “attitude of gratitude,” and changing your feelings about “right now” can have an amazing, positive impact on your life. I have also realized patience isn't necessarily “just a virtue.” It's an attitude that can make your whole life different and so much better. Sometimes, when things are too overwhelming, and you are paralyzed by everything being too much, all you have to do is: STOP, take a breath, look around, and don't do anything except be grateful for where you are. Sometimes gratitude is what patience looks like. This old dog may still have the ability to learn new tricks after all. Who knows, he may still have a few of his own “new tricks” up his sleeve too.