

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO 2 NOVEMBER, 1991

The purpose of this Newsletter is to bring members and potential members up to date on Society matters.

SOCIETY DEVELOPMENTS

The Australian Veterinary History Society is now firmly established. The Executive has been busy with machinery matters. These include the drafting of a constitution which was needed to support our application to the AVA for acceptance as a Special Interest Group. We have not yet received a reply but are hopeful that this will be granted. Such a status gives us various benefits while still allowing non-veterinarians to be members.

The membership response has been good and we now have 80 financial members.

NEXT MEETING

Arrangements are well in hand for our next meeting. This will be held as part of the AVA Annual General Meeting in Adelaide during May, 1992. We have been allotted the Wednesday afternoon.

Our program will concentrate on South Australian veterinary history and the tentative program is as follows:

- * The history of veterinary practice in South Australia -
Dr Bruce Eastick
- * The development of government veterinary services in South
Australia -
Dr Brick Smith
- * Dr Lionel Bull: A great veterinarian -
Dr Kevin Dobson
- * The Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science -
Dr Robin Giesecke

Dr Kevin Dobson has kindly taken on the responsibility for local arrangements. It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend especially those from South Australia.

PROPOSED SOCIETY JOURNAL

The Committee was investigating the possibility of publishing a journal, perhaps under the title of "Australian Veterinary History". It was to be a vehicle for publishing our veterinary history including the papers given at our Annual Meeting and contributions from our members.

This proposal has been overtaken by an offer from Trevor Farragher, Editor of the AVJ. He has examined the papers from the May meeting and has offered to publish them together in an issue of the Journal together with an editorial on veterinary history.

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Such a course would save the Society considerable expense and labour and is the line of action preferred by the Executive. Perhaps we will publish our own journal sometime in the future.

NEWSLETTER

It is hoped to issue a Newsletter about three times a year. In keeping with our historical thrust, the Secretary/Editor would be delighted to receive historical or personal snippets to include in future newsletters. Some of those on hand are printed below.

HISTORICAL SNIPPETS

Vaccines and Vaccinators: Len Pockley

In the early 1930's, the vaccine for Black Disease came into general use. It was administered by veterinarians or under their direct supervision.

Instructions were that the site of injection had to be sterilised before injection, ordinary 2 mL hypodermic syringes were used, with a freshly sterilised needle for each sheep. Each dose was separately extracted from the vaccine container. The task was slow and laborious and was a disincentive to many sheep owners to its use.

In the field, trials were made with various shortcuts. Firstly, as to the need for sterilisation if the skin was clean and dry. Some then started to use the same needle for a number of sheep and so on; one of the big drawbacks was the repeated filling of small syringes and the risk of dust contamination.

It was not long before the inventive practitioners started to look at the possibility of multi-dose syringes. First of all the use of 10 mL and 20 mL syringes to reduce the frequency of filling; then several looked at the possibility of an automatically-filling multi-dose syringe.

There were some reservations as to the effectiveness of sterilising of these. There were two main inventors concerned, Elliots (later Drug Houses of Australia) and A.C. McKay of Canberra. Later L.W.G. Lee developed an adaptation of his carbon tetrachloride drenching gun (all metal) which was readily sterilised.

I can recall in the mid-1930's having an audience of a number of local sheep owners to watch the vaccination of some 2 000 sheep per day by one operator, with two men turning the sheep over. This was regarded as great progress that made vaccination economically viable.

Since then the only untoward effects I have ever seen from vaccination done with sheep standing in the race, either in the loose skin behind the shoulder or the side of the jaw, has been in cases where the sheep were wet at the time of injection. Wet skin apparently does not have the same cleansing properties as dry skin. In these cases some low grade abscesses occurred. It appears the alum-precipitated vaccine was itself something of a restricter of infection spread.

Over the years it has become a lesson in the derivation of a sound economical procedure after starting with a strictly technically safe procedure and slowly developing by evaluation into what is now a well-proven and practical procedure.

Again, the present benefits are, I am sure, not fully appreciated by anyone who has not had experience of the original methods used.

M&B 693 - First Use: Len Pockley

Looking back from our present familiarity with modern drugs, particularly antibiotics, it is hard to realise the terrific impact the advent of M&B 693 had on veterinary medicine.

No doubt each of the old hands has his own recollections of how it affected him. Mine concerned the apparent resurrection of a heavy draught mare, a watercart horse. She was evacuated to hospital with obvious respiratory distress and running a high temperature.

The stethoscope revealed she had a large quantity of pleural fluid. This was aspirated daily, yielding on the first occasion over a gallon, with subsequent amounts only slightly diminished.

A limited supply of M&B 693 was received for trial use at that time. It was decided to make one major trial that would require the whole of the stock supplied. Medication was started on the second morning. By the next morning the mare was obviously less distressed and temperature lowered somewhat. Medication was continued for four days until supplies were exhausted. Fluid aspiration decreased dramatically by the fourth day (third of treatment) and was nil on the next day, temperature was near normal on that day also.

The mare made a full and rapid recovery.

I can still recall the feeling of wonder - almost disbelief at the magical change from a moribund, deeply distressed mare with an expected life of at best a few days, to vigorous good health.

I don't recall any antibiotic medication since that has caused me such wonder at its magical powers.

Only those who were involved with treatment of animals before the advent of M&B 693 can fully appreciate the dramatic change it made to veterinary medicine.

(M&B 693 was sulphapyridine marketed by May & Baker. This account is from Len's Royal Australian Army Veterinary Corps days early in World War II.)

Report on Veterinary Science and Practice in Australia

(The above is the title of a report addressed to the Secretary of the British National Veterinary Congress and published in the British journal, *Veterinarian*, in 1881. Part is reproduced here.)

"Sir, - In accordance with your communication dated 24th November, 1880, requesting us to inquire into and report upon the state of veterinary practice and science in these colonies, we beg to forward you the following condensed report compiled from those of the secretaries, together with a number of suggestions for the general advancement of the profession.

"It is our first duty to state that the steps now being taken in the mother country to secure the legal protection of the profession have met with the unanimous approval of veterinary surgeons in these colonies, and that although the passing of the 'Veterinary Surgeons Bill' will not directly affect us, it may be the means of similar protective measures being adopted here, for hitherto all attempts to obtain protection have failed, in the consequence of there being none in England. The profession has never been fully appreciated in the Australian colonies for the following reasons, viz.:

"1. A large proportion of the stockowners and farmers have had no previous experience of the management of stock in countries or parts where veterinary surgeons were available, consequently they have had but a very imperfect knowledge of the utility of the profession, and those who have endeavoured to obtain the services of veterinary surgeons have been so frequently imposed upon by men practicing under assumed titles that they have been led to form very unjust opinions of it.

"2. The Colonial Governments being chiefly composed of a similar class of men has led to the employment of laymen and medical men in what are the legitimate duties of the veterinary surgeons only. At the present time there is not a single veterinary surgeon in the Australian colonies wholly employed in government service. All stock inspection is done by lay inspectors, except in doubtful cases where there is great difficulty and a heavy responsibility. Then the veterinary surgeon is called in. It should also be stated that whenever a commission has been appointed to deal with outbreaks of disease in stock, &c., medical men and lay inspectors have been employed, and veterinary surgeons systematically excluded. This, we are sure, did not arise from lack of veterinary surgeons to undertake these duties, for able and worthy men have always been available, but seems to have arisen from an inability of those in power to discriminate between the legitimate duties of veterinary surgeons and those of medical men and lay stock inspectors. The attached reports will show the correctness of these statements, and that enormous sums of money have been uselessly expended, whilst fatal maladies have continued to spread and cause heavy losses."

.....

"The present state of veterinary progress in these colonies is therefore similar to what it was in England fifty years ago, but it is not the intention of colonial veterinary surgeons to allow it to remain so. Having observed the beneficial effects of the united action of the members of the profession in home counties, the veterinary surgeons of Australia about twelve months ago formed themselves into an association called the 'Australasian Veterinary Medical Association', which is now fully established, and has branches in all the Australian colonies. Although so recently formed it has already done much good, and bids fair to become an important factor in raising the profession in public estimation.

"Through the efforts of the association a Parliamentary committee was recently appointed in Victoria to inquire into the Diseases of Stock Act (see report attached) with a view of adopting improved legislation, while another important object gained by its influence was to get the names of all unqualified men struck off the list of veterinary surgeons in the 'Melbourne Directory'. The secretary is at present engaged in obtaining a list of all veterinary surgeons residing in the Australian colonies, and it is the intention of the association shortly to publish its transactions periodically."

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"We have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient servants,

- Graham Mitchell, F.R.C.V.S., Gen. Sec. for Australia.
- W.T. Kendall, M.R.C.V.S., Sec. Victoria, Hon. Sec. A.V.M.A.
- J. Stewart, M.L.C., M.R.C.V.S., New South Wales.
- T. Chalwin, M.R.C.V.S., South Australia.
- J. Irving, M.R.C.V.S., Queensland.
- A. Park, M.R.C.V.S., Tasmania.
- C.A. Calvert, M.R.C.V.S., New Zealand."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Peter Mylrea and myself wish to thank you for the support you have given to the Society by accepting Foundation Membership. We hope the next few years will see a strong group which will play its part in researching and recording the history of the profession in Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Newsletter was set up by our member, Janet Bullard, and her assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The coupon below is for persons wishing to join the Society.

I wish to become a Foundation Member of the Australian Veterinary History Society.

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode:

My foundation subscription of ten dollars (\$10.00) is attached.

Please return to: Dr P.J. Mylrea
13 Sunset Avenue
Camden NSW 2570