

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter Number 4 - July 1992

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ANNUAL MEETING - ADELAIDE - 13 MAY 1992

The Society's Meeting held during the AVA Conference was very successful. There were about 40 people in attendance for the presentation of the historical papers and a somewhat lesser number for the business session.

The afternoon started with the presentation of four papers, the abstracts of which are given below.

Then followed the Business Session and the highlights were:

- * A Constitution approved by the AVA Executive was ratified by members. This makes up a Special Interest Group of the AVA but membership is not restricted to veterinarians or AVA members.
- * The financial position is satisfactory with a credit balance of \$632.
- * The following officers were elected:

President: R I Taylor

Secretary/Treasurer: P J Mylrea

Committee Members : I W Beveridge, K L Hughes and

I Gunn.

- * It was resolved that the subscription for 1993 be \$15-00.

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS GIVEN AT THE ADELAIDE CONFERENCE

The Development of Government Veterinary Services in South Australia - Brick Smith

The appointment in 1840 of an inspector to prevent the sale for slaughter of scab-infected sheep and of a registrar of cattle brand, were the origins of government veterinary services. These services were expanded in 1853 to eradicate sheep scab and in 1858-60 to prevent the introduction of bovine pleuropneumonia from Victoria. The equine influenza epidemic in the lower north in the 1870s led to further expansion of the services. The various legal provisions were consolidated in the Stock Diseases Act 1888. Prior to 1898 when the first full-time qualified veterinarian was appointed, private practitioners were employed part-time as required. The demand for the control of herd and flock diseases, particularly those transmissible to man and to protect export trade, resulted in a number of new Acts. The 1950s saw changes aimed at the expansion of private practice in rural areas.

Veterinary practice in South Australia – Bruce Eastick

A dearth of qualified veterinarians resulted in a slow start for practice in SA. In 1938, a Veterinary Surgeons Act provided for veterinary surgeons (qualified) and veterinary practitioners (drawn from Government stock inspectors and those with Army Veterinary Corps experience).

By 1938, it was necessary to provide for Veterinary Permit Holders, persons who could assist with some common ailments.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, there was a marked upsurge, particularly in rural areas. Three initiatives which assisted were: a) Some dairy companies and stock firms subsidised veterinary practice; b) Dept of Agriculture released scholarship holders to commence rural practice; c) Contracts by the department for tuberculosis testing and brucellosis vaccination and the accreditation of practitioners to undertake valuations for the Cattle and Swine Compensation Acts.

In much the same period the rapid increase in migration from the UK and Europe saw an explosive demand for small animal practice.

Since that date, intensive farming practices, particularly in the pig and poultry industries, have led to further demands.

The Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science – a focus for the veterinary profession in South Australia – Robin Giesecke

When the Institute was established by Act of Parliament in 1938, it continued a tradition of service to the agricultural and veterinary communities established in the early 1900s by the Adelaide Hospital Bacteriology Laboratory and the SA Government Laboratory for Bacteriology and Pathology.

The Institute, in the absence of a veterinary faculty in the State and with ties to the University of Adelaide and close working relationships between its medical, veterinary and scientific staff, provided a scientific focus for the veterinary profession in SA.

This paper traces the history of the Institute's veterinary division up to 1982 when the IMVS Act was rewritten and the veterinary division passed to the Department of Agriculture as the Central Veterinary Laboratories.

Dr Lionel Bull: the man. – Kevin Dobson

Who was Lionel Bull? This question could be asked by the younger graduate or those distanced by vocation in the many fields of veterinary science. Lionel Bately Bull (1889–1978) is acknowledged as one of the professions 'grand old men'. He emerged as a leader through his skills in bacteriology and pathology (animal and human) during the first 22 years of his career in SA, followed by 20 years in Victoria as Chief of the then newly formed Division of Animal Health of the CSIR. He continued with his research in the normal retirement period for another 13 years. His contribution

to veterinary science was enormous. His 88 scientific publications include many on sheep diseases (cheesy gland, big-head of rams, lumpy wool, enterotoxaemia, flystrike, scrapie, soursob poisoning, toxæmic jaundice); cattle problems (mastitis, enzootic haematuria); horse conditions (summer sores, Kimberley horse disease); myxomatosis of rabbits and many papers on comparative pathology.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Once again the Editor requests contributions for this section.

Recollections of dairy practice in the 1940s – John Chalmers

Many younger members of the profession are probably unaware that graduate veterinary practice in rural Australia was virtually nonexistent until the 1940s.

It was during the war years that Ian Clunies Ross (then Professor of Veterinary Science and Director of Scientific Manpower) convinced Mr Spencer (Managing Director of Nestles for Australasia) that with the assistance of the veterinary profession brucellosis, tuberculosis, and mastitis could be largely controlled. If this was done in a dairying district one could expect an increase in milk supply of a conservative 20%. This would mean that the Nestles factory at Dennington (Warnanbool) which had a daily intake of 100 000 gallons could increase its intake by 20 000 gallons without the tankers driving an extra mile.

As a result of this decision Clunies Ross had Nils Sjogren released from the army and Nils agreed to set up the initial dairy factory sponsored practice at Dennington. The Professor also assisted my discharge from the navy in October 1945 to take up the position of Junior House Surgeon at the Vet. School and following 12 months in that position and a further 12 months in rural practice west of Sydney I joined the Nestles organisation in Maffra in September 1947 (largely because there was a house found with the job).

The 3 years I spent at Maffra was a great learning experience in all ways. Firstly, because of the small number of veterinarians in the field feed back to the teaching institutions of the existence of diseases other than major problems was minimal and, secondly, because of the scarcity of large animal clinical practice during the course our lack of knowledge was monumental. Every problem had to be approached from first principles and it was a regular occurrence to track down a condition which in our lectures we had been told had not been reported in the country.

I had a small laboratory with a young assistant whom I had trained to culture, stain and examine milk samples putting aside anything of which they were unsure. Mastitis was approached on a logical basis – no milk sampling until shed hygiene and routine was brought up to standard. With mastitis as bad as it was then and antibiotics only a recent innovation (and only available through me) that wasn't long. Then quarter sampling of all cows in the herd was undertaken. What a pity the profession could not maintain control of such an important disease.

Brucellosis was a major problem made more difficult by the peddlers of patent medicines claiming that these were effective in preventing abortion, despite the fact that the cows normally only aborted

the first pregnancy after infection anyhow. However the use of Strain 19 on calves and adults, with blood testing of all adults before vaccination, proved most effective particularly when one could then indicate which cows were likely to abort. We set up our own agglutination tests in our lab and that speeded up the process considerably.

TB was also rife and it was generally necessary to rear heifers on processed milk to make it economically feasible to have enough clean replacements prior to a general test. A large proportion of heifers reared on herd milk were commonly affected.

But the greatest difficulty was gaining the confidence of farmers who traditionally distrusted any form of book learning. I achieved this partly by beating them at their own game - I would unobtrusively look for and then remove all supernumerary teats when vaccinating calves - the owners hadn't noticed them. I would be called to dehorn a mob of old cows as they didn't like the job. So I would allow one hour for 70 cows, give instructions the week before as to the construction of an improvised crush in front of the dairy (no other being available) and tell them to have all their neighbours around to keep the cattle moving. I'd have most of the job done in 3/4 hour and hand the farmer the dehorners to finish off as I wouldn't have time in future for that sort of work. However I was careful never to tell them how to hold the dehorners and then after ten minutes of futile effort I'd complete the job - they were usually suitably impressed.

But I guess the handling of dystokias and treatment of metabolic diseases did most to establish a reputation (and of course the ability to handle an unbroken horse).

I wonder if we will ever sort out all the metabolic problems. Even in those years there were periods when I would take blood samples of all metabolic cases and the samples taken from cows which didn't respond would be sent to the Veterinary Research Institute. Harold Albiston, Col Gorrie, and Dan Murnane were all most helpful but I doubt we really achieved any results.

Infertility was a major problem - all ascribed to the aftermath of brucellosis and it was only when that was brought under control within a herd that trichomoniasis, then vibriosis, then leptospirosis were tracked down.

A constant source of enjoyment in Maffra on a late summer evening was to pull off the road and have a yarn with "Mallie" [Malmo] who would be heading in the other direction. Mallie, Jacob Malmo's father, worked for the Co-op and a more respected vet it would be difficult to find.

Having access to farm records through the factory farm supervisor it was possible to compile production records on a per cow and per farm basis both as regards butterfat and pounds, shillings and pence. These were circulated so that the supplier could compare his results with those of other anonymous farmers.

However as I say it was a great learning experience and at the end of 3 years in Maffra I think I can say I was a general adviser in many fields to many factory suppliers. But how fortunate we were to be able to learn our veterinary science a little at a time - I shudder to think of the prospect of starting off now.

Veterinary Surgeons in the Military Forces of NSW – Peter Mylrea

The Australian Army Veterinary Corps played an important role in the Australian Army from the time of Federation through World War I and in the Militia between the two wars.

Veterinary surgeons, however, had been involved in the defence forces of the pre-federation colonies and this account covers developments in NSW. Perhaps similar activities occurred in the other colonies.

Britain had taken responsibility for the defence of the colonies up till 1870. At that time they removed their garrisons from Australia and the Colonies became responsible for their ground forces.

In NSW the Defence Force consisted of a small number of permanent staff with the greater part made up of volunteers who served on a part-time basis. Among the latter were a number of veterinary surgeons.

The first veterinary surgeon to serve in the Military Force of NSW was Anthony Willows (see Newsletter No 3). He volunteered as Veterinary Surgeon in the Artillery Company of the New South Wales Contingent which departed for the Soudan [Sudan] Campaign in March 1885. The Contingent was in Africa for only 7 weeks and did little fighting. During the return journey to Australia Willows died and was buried at sea on 6 June 1885.

Willows was followed by William Scott. Scott graduated from the New Edinburgh Veterinary College in 1883, arrived in Sydney and practiced from about 1885 to 1895. In 1887 he was appointed to be Veterinary Surgeon of the Reserve Corps of Sydney Lancers.' (NSW Govt Gazette 1887, p 6659) and in 1889 he became 'Veterinary Surgeon to the Permanent Military Force of the Colony.' (NSW Govt Gazette 1889, p 236) and was promoted to Captain on 31-1-1896.

The Army and Navy List for 1896 shows the Veterinary Department of the Military Force to consist of William Scott, as Principal Veterinary Surgeon at Head Quarters, and Honorary Veterinary Lieutenants A.P. Gribben and F.W.Melhuish. This List is the last time Scott was mentioned.

Gribben was commissioned in 1896, promoted to Veterinary Captain on 1898 and became Principal Veterinary Surgeon at Head Quarters. He served in the Boer War in South Africa in 1900. (Army and Navy List 1901) When Gribben went to South Africa (18-1-1900) S.T.D.Symons became Acting Principal Veterinary Surgeon. Melhuish was also commissioned in 1896 and was attached to the Lancers. He served in South Africa in 1899-1900. Both Gribben and Melhuish were practitioners well into the 1900s.

The sixth veterinary surgeon in the force was Harold Bowker who was attached to the Mounted Rifles. He was at the Boer War in 1900.

After the Boer War the Army and Navy List for 1901 shows the Veterinary Department to consist of Gribben, Melhuish, Bowker, and Symons (Acting). After 1901 the military forces of the Colonies ceased to exist. They were gathered together to form the Australian Military Force under Commonwealth control.

In all, six veterinary surgeons served in the military forces of NSW during the colonial era. Four saw full time overseas service and one died while on active duty.

We Remember Professor Carne – Hugh McL. Gordon

On a sad but pleasing occasion, 5 November 1990, Dame Leonie Cramer, Deputy Chancellor of the University of Sydney, unveiled a plaque and photograph to name a lecture theatre in the Gunn Building at the Veterinary School in Honour of the late Professor H.R. Carne. There was a small but representative gathering of graduates, presided over by the Dean, Professor Marsh Edwards. Among the 'oldies' who had been students of Carne were Tom Hungerford, John Keep, Harry Carroll, Virginia Osborne, Bob Bain, and Hugh Gordon. Bob gave a brief but moving eulogy of one who with meticulous enthusiasm had taught us pathology and bacteriology. He recalled the many qualities of Carne who with characteristic devotion and obligation gave much to Veterinary Science and the Sydney School.

Carne graduated in 1923 with Hons. I and University Medal: his contemporaries were C.H. Denison, Ross Nott, W.P. Ryan, J.A. Schofield and Charles Turbet. He was the first research officer appointed to the Glenfield Veterinary research Station; he had lectured and demonstrated at the Veterinary School earlier in 1923. As a Walter and Eliza Hall Veterinary Research Fellow he spent a year (1927–28) at the Laboratoire Nationale de Recherche Veterinaire at Alfort, near Paris, and at the Pasteur Institute, and returned to Sydney as lecturer in pathology and bacteriology in 1928 (I was one of the seven in his class). He was Dean of the Faculty in 1947–53 and 1960–61 and with energy and enthusiasm established the McGarvie Smith Animal Husbandry Farm, and the Departments of Veterinary Physiology and Animal Husbandry. He served as President of the NSW Division of the AVA, as Treasurer and President of the AVA, and was elected to Fellowship. He had also been Hon. Secretary of the Australian National Research Council and Chairman of the NSW State Committee of CSIRO. He had an important role in the planning and early development of the McMaster Laboratory in which he had a room for many years, and his practical classes were conducted in that building. From his association with a prominent grazing family came the benefaction as the Common Rooms at the Veterinary School, where in 1959, at his instigation, was held a special dinner for which he had a special Latin Grace prepared by the Department of Classics. He delivered the first J.D. Stewart Oration in the Great hall in 1960: a memorable look at the history of veterinary science in Australia (Aust vet J v 36 p?). The Australian College of Veterinary Scientists offered him Honorary fellowship, which, with characteristic modesty he declined, feeling that he had not done much for the College.

He retired to Cambridge in 1965 where he carried on his research on caseous lymphadenitis – his life work – until only a few months before he died in February 1990. He was 89.

In adding his name to those of other veterinarians who have contributed so much to the Veterinary School – one thinks of J.D. Stewart, Clunies Ross, Whitehouse, Gunn, Dodd – the University of Sydney has truly recognised meritorious service. Go sometime to the School and note these names, and look especially in the lecture theatre on the second floor of the Gunn Building

Army Veterinary and Remount Duties – Len Pockley

[Editor. This is one of Len's experiences while in the Australian Army Veterinary Corps. Another was given in Newsletter No 2.]

Early in 1940 the Hunter River Remount Sub-depot and Veterinary Hospital was established, situated in "Buffiers Paddock" between Rutherford and Lochinvar.

The unit consisted of one officer and some 24 other ranks, made up of a warrant officer, a farrier sergeant, veterinary corporal and a team of horsemen with a strong rural background.

The remount depot was to the north of the New England Highway and the veterinary hospital to the south. It was originally an entirely tented camp, apart from a small kitchen-mess building, though later other structures were erected.

It was a quite picturesque site with a good covering of clumps of ironbark trees and an area of light scrub. All facilities such as yards were constructed by unit personnel, mostly of poles cut on site.

Experienced staff helped with the original requisitions for equipment, thereafter we were on our own. It was a salutary processing learning that a "dixie" was in fact a "kettle camp oval 8 quart" and so forth. The whole basis of equipment appeared to be the same as used at the end of World War I.

There appeared to be a great shortage of items such as suitable ropes, and as a result there was probably a local shortage in the local railway goods yards, that became a much more ready source of supply than official requisitions.

There were the usual masses of paper to be completed. Somewhere in the army archives must be a large heap of books of form R17 – transfer of horses.

At each morning inspection of, at times, up to some hundreds of remounts, broken in and unbroken, some would require veterinary attention. This meant completing a form R17 in triplicate including the identity (army serial number) of each horse, signed by the evacuating officer (myself). These horses together with forms R17 were then taken over the road to the veterinary hospital where some time later I would again inspect them and brief the staff on treatment, after signing a receipt for the horses on the same form R17.

The whole process was repeated when the horse was returned to the depot! As each book of forms was completed it was dispatched to some accounting or record section. I often wondered whether anybody ever laboriously checked all these movements or whether they did not just accept our regular periodical returns of horses on hand. Maybe there is still some corner of some building crammed full of forms R17 all signed as transferor and transferee by the same signature.

The mind boggles at what deductions some future research historian may draw if these ever come to light. At least our unit fought a good war in that our books always balanced! Incidental to that we broke in, shod and supplied to units a large number of horses that achieved an excellent record of service, with few ever returned to the depot as unmanageable or unsound.