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Veterinary Public Health

Opportunity, challenge, responsibility

F. A. Spurrell, '46*

MANY an individual recently assigned to active duty with United States Army Veterinary Corps has expressed surprise upon finding he was to learn federal specifications covering such things as fresh shrimp, lard substitute, creamery butter, eggs; in fact all food products of animal origin. Yet where would a more logical assignment to determine soundness, contamination, and fitness for consumption of such products fall? All of his special senses and thought processes are trained in skillful application of scientific facts to detection of gross and microscopic deviations from normal in animal tissues during life and at post mortem, diagnosis of their causative agents, and methods of preventing their occurrence.

Responsibility is Manifold

These experiences in our armed forces have pointed out a new field of opportunity and responsibility for service to veterinarians. This responsibility is to assure consumers, producers, and veterinarians themselves that products of animal origin reach ultimate consumers, housewives, commercial establishments serving food, and manufacturers of non-animal food products, in a wholesome, uncontaminated form fit for human consumption.

As one investigates this responsibility he immediately sees there are many places where food products of animal origin may become unfit for consumption. These may be divided into three rough categories. These are: during production by living animals, during processing of their products, and during transportation and storage of these products both before and after processing.

Present day veterinary endeavors cover only very limited portions of this field. U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry regulation covers some contagious diseases in animal production. Supervision of processing by the Meat Inspection Division is performed only if meat or its products are to be entered in interstate or foreign commerce as articles capable of being used as food for man. Even this control is at present relaxed to some extent. Milk sanitation is gaining headway in larger municipalities but smaller communities offer many opportunities for service.

Aside from opportunities of more complete responsibility in fields already entered there remain many places where veterinarians are suited for sanitary control work. Some of these are: poultry and poultry products, meat and meat products on an intrastate and community basis, fresh and processed fish and seafood products.

Sanitary Control

It is necessary to inform the public that vast amounts of meat enter intrastate and local commerce without even a semblance of sanitary control. This is one of our most urgent and pressing needs in veterinary public health service at present. Quick freezing and frozen storage are rapidly advancing in importance as methods of processing, transporting, and mer-

* The author desires to acknowledge information of experiences obtained in this field rendered by Dr. G. G. Baker, D.V.M., Spencer, Iowa, and Dr. A. R. Mearney, D.V.M., City Dairy & Meat Inspector, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
chandising food products. With expansion of frozen food lockers and home freezers this mode of marketing and merchandising animal products will assume an increasing share of our food economy. Due to these facts sanitary supervision and sanitary control methods will of necessity assume more importance in local meat movement. Alert veterinarians will be ready with answers when sanitary problems arise in conjunction with these methods of meat distribution.

Technical knowledge is a requisite for guarding our food supplies of animal origin at all points on their journey through production, processing, transportation, storage and marketing. Veterinarians are in an enviable position to acquire this information and accept this challenge.

Developing Necessity Into Demand

Veterinarians themselves must see a necessity for veterinary public health service and appreciate its scope. They must find in themselves a sincere desire to fulfill their position of responsibility to members of their community and to those who will ultimately consume products of animal origin produced, processed, transported, or stored in that community. They must realize that positions of meat and dairy inspectors cannot be adequately filled by appointment of unqualified individuals or contributors to campaign funds. Reasons why these persons are inadequate must be understood. Veterinarians must realize, for example, that complete dairy sanitation service does not consist of routine methylene blue tests as milk enters a processing plant.

When veterinarians realize their field of responsibility, its limitations and its scope, they will find in themselves a neutral or even a complacent attitude on part of local health authorities and an exasperating apathy in community members as a whole. In other instances an extreme willingness to cooperate will be in evidence. Many times this will be found due to an unfortunate incidence of some animal disease transmissible to man. Brucellosis, trichinosis, leptospirosis, tularemia and rabies are but a few of these which come to mind. Veterinarians should know what these diseases are, their mode of transmission to man, and methods for control and prevention of their incidence in animals and man. Then when approached with questions they will be able to give a favorable impression of their qualifications for work in this field. This will also impress members of communities and those in authority with necessity for sanitary control of products of animal origin. Such examples need not occur in a local community to afford opportunity of pointing out how they might just as conceivably happen there.

Probably many rural veterinarians shun mention of these things in their community believing it will harm practice. This is true to a certain extent but those things which are hardest to do often bring greatest rewards both from personal satisfaction and also from monetary reward over a period of time. Firm tact and sincerity of purpose often overcome any temporary disadvantage accruing from being misunderstood by individuals adversely affected. Remember that local physicians are just as interested in uncontaminated food products as veterinarians. They will be of help and assistance in promoting sanitary control work.

Sanitary Control Procedures

Education in methods of sanitary control is a slow process, but one in which gain is more or less permanent. Once individuals concerned see reasons for doing things a certain way, how to perform them, and consequences of failure to operate in this manner, they are in a more cooperative mood. One fundamental requisite in education is that an instructor be competent both in subject knowledge and in methods of presenting it which are interesting, informative and acceptable to those asking for information. Charts, statistics, diagrams, graphs, motion pictures, photographs and actual examples are all good instructional aids. Demonstration and promotional work done among 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America and youth organizations will give great value for energy expended. Adult discussion
club requests for appearance should not be consistently brushed aside with a “too busy.”

Competency in knowledge of sanitary control starts in our veterinary colleges. They need men well versed in public health who understand instructive science and art. Here veterinary students will lay a groundwork for accurate knowledge of factors involved and their management in sanitary control procedures. Then they will be in a position to inform others as to necessity for correct sanitary methods which are essential in production, processing, and marketing products of animal origin.

Cooperative Measures

Cooperative sanitary control measures have not proven satisfactory. There are always those who expect to be favored or those who are defiant. Legal standards and measures are required for these groups. They also require periodic inspections, often daily, which are necessary for sanitary control to be effective.

After demonstrating to local authorities and members of a community necessity for sanitary supervision of products of animal origin and convincing them that it is needed, veterinarians will be called upon to help formulate ordinances, inspection procedures, penalties, and other administrative or functional details. They should know where information of this kind can be obtained and have it quite well organized for presentation when called upon. Sources are: U. S. Public Health Milk Ordinance and Code, War Food Administration Meat Inspection Regulations (These constitute an amended B.A.I. Order 211, Revised), Disposal of Diseased Poultry Carcasses and Parts. State public health authorities will supply information as to state laws and regulations. Visits to nearby cities with successful systems in operation will give many pointers.

Establishment of points of inspection is a procedure which is unfortunately many times determined by availability of time and money. Places which suggest themselves as advantageous or necessary points of inspection are: 1. Inspection of primary producers plant, i.e., dairy farm or poultry ranch, including method of transportation to processing manufacturer. 2. Processing plant where general sanitary conditions, construction, personnel and methods of operation should be checked as well as ante mortem and post mortem inspections performed. 3. Processed products should be inspected at time of loading for shipment, observing methods taken to insure arrival at destination in a sound condition. Notation of inspection should be made upon bill of lading, and products identified in some manner. 4. Storage facilities require inspection for adequacy, construction, and periodic checks on products in storage. 5. Inspection at destination is necessary to determine soundness and sanitation at this time. 6. Wholesale and retail establishments handling animal food products require inspections for sanitation, construction, methods of handling, personnel and distributory facilities to ultimate consumers.

Remuneration

Remuneration of public service officials always is a problem. Public health workers definitely should not be political appointees nor paid in such a manner. In smaller communities manner of payment is sometimes included in an ordinance, each producer and processing agent paying a pro-rata sum to city government which then pays a veterinary inspector. Possibly this could be extended to consumer units over a period of a month or year. Sometimes special funds are set aside for purposes of sanitary supervision of animal products. State supervision may be necessary in intrastate processing, movement and storage. In that case funds should come from state treasuries.

Conclusions

Veterinarians are challenged by an opportunity to maintain products of animal origin in an uncontaminated form fit for human consumption until they reach ultimate consumers. This can be done by acquiring knowledge of problems which are encountered, methods of overcoming them and convincing community mem-
bers of the necessity for adequate supervision during production, processing, transporting and storing these products. This is accomplished through helping city authorities put teeth in ordinances and turning in a conscientious, sincere performance in accordance with dictates of wholesome, sound and uncontaminated food production. Veterinarians accepting this responsibility will enlarge their area of possible service. In so doing they will advance themselves both individually and as a profession.

REFERENCES

Brooding baby chicks more than 100 feet from adult birds during the first two weeks has reduced greatly their future death rate from leukosis (one form commonly known as fowl paralysis) in experiments conducted by the poultry department of Cornell University. In seven years of testing, the death loss from this disease while between 160 and 500 days of age was consistently lower among pullets which, as day old chicks, had been started 110 feet from adult birds than among those of equal resistance, which had been boarded for two weeks in a house only 40 feet away. These results offer a practical way to reduce losses by the use of isolation.

National Dog Week
September 16 to 22

Dr. James Farquharson, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association, has accepted membership on the advisory committee of National Dog Week for 1945, it is announced by Secretary Harry Miller, 424 Madison Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

Dr. Farquharson succeeds Dr. Charles W. Bower, who represented the A.V.M.A. on the National Dog Week Advisory Committee during his incumbency in office.

Other members of the 1945 advisory committee, all of whom also served last year, include Dr. James E. West, chief scout, Boy Scouts of America; Harry I. Caesar, president, Dogs for Defense, Inc.; Dale Carnegie, psychologist and author; Sydney H. Coleman, president, American Humane Association; Dr. W. A. Young, managing director, Chicago Anti-Cruelty Society; Bob Becker, editor Outdoorsman and outdoors editor, Chicago Tribune; Peter Boggs, McNaught Syndicate dog columnist; and George Butz, kennel editor, Philadelphia Inquirer.

Observance

The dates of this year’s observance are Sept. 16 to 22. This marks the 18th consecutive year during which National Dog Week has been observed in the United States. Through its 7-point educational program, National Dog Week seeks to serve dog-owner and non dog-owner alike while safeguarding the welfare and future of all dogs.

With government restrictions on important dog shows National Dog Week, which is observed on a local community basis, promises to prove of more value than in any previous year, Mr. Miller states.

Last year more than 850 firms, groups, kennels and individuals made contributions to National Dog Week. There is reason to believe that this number will be exceeded this year. A contribution of $25.00 or more secures an Active membership in National Dog Week, Inc., while smaller contributions carry honorary membership in “Man’s Best Friend” Club.