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Postwar Planning II

An outlet for veterinarians in postwar state programs

W. G. Bonelli, ’45

Out of every war there have come remarkable advances, usually in the fields of scientific endeavor. Apparently a valuable result of the present war is the reconsideration of the place of each member in the normal life of a community. Each organization is investigating its place in the community in order to enlarge its work, raise its position in the esteem of others, and improve the income of its members. None of these results can possibly be attained except by providing better service. The collective result of the action of these groups should be a vast improvement in our standard of living.

Use of Army Training

The veterinary profession will be in a peculiar position because of the conditions which the war’s end will present. There may be quite a number of men, who, because of their military duties, have had special training in meat and milk sanitation. Many of these may be available for the development of such programs in civilian life. Public health has been primarily the concern of physicians, but it is also true that much of the work done in connection with it can be accomplished best by a veterinarian. This work is now ready to be enlarged and the veterinarian is recognized as being the most capable one to administer the sanitation of food products and the control of human diseases that may have animal reservoirs.

The only feasible means of treating these problems is by a comprehensive inspection system for all animal products intended for human consumption. This control commonly includes meat inspection and milk sanitation, but in the future supervision of food handling will be included because of the veterinarian’s understanding of the spread of disease by uninspected food products. The scope of the work is constantly changing because of new problems such as the increase in frozen locker plants and changing concepts of sanitary construction and procedure.

Federal meat inspection is fairly well understood, but it includes only meat entering interstate commerce. Our problem is local inspection and the possibilities of applying it to new areas. Perhaps the most advanced setup is that which has been developed by California. Since the system there has progressed to the point where other states use it as an example, it will be used in these discussions for descriptive purposes. While about 65 percent of the meat consumed in the United States is subjected to federal inspection, the situation is reversed in California where little meat is shipped out of the state. A state system to supplement that of the government was obviously needed if the consumers were to have the same protection given in other states. The present system is one based on the California Meat Inspection Law passed in 1917, which since has been fortified by numerous amendments. It provides for mandatory inspection of all slaughtering establishments,

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with a few exceptions, by state inspectors or by inspectors of municipal meat inspection systems under state approval and supervision. It opens all the marketing areas to all slaughtering houses by eliminating previously existing barriers to trade put up by certain city ordinances. The seizure and destruction of all meat and meat products not bearing proper inspection brands or labels is provided for. This service is paid for by compulsory fees collected from the establishments served, and is supplied upon the same basis, if the service is requested, in the few counties where it is not required. The veterinarians are hired by the state upon a full or part time basis. Established practitioners do not supplement their practices by this work. Part time assignments are made in localities where there are no veterinarians. Veterinary service is thus brought to these areas by meat inspection. This use of meat inspection as a form of subsidy to needy areas is worthwhile when the decreased animal loss is considered. In the case of some small slaughtering plants one veterinarian is assigned to more than one place, with the inspection hours for each set by the state.

**Laboratory Facilities**

A meat inspection laboratory is maintained for analyses of meat, meat products, and materials used in their preparation. A supervising veterinarian who has specialized in construction work is retained to advise on buildings and equipment. Blueprints of reconstruction and new work must be approved by the state to insure "proper" plants from a meat inspection standpoint.

The procedures of milk sanitation are likewise fairly well understood, but again the administrative arrangements of the local areas are not widely known. In California, milk sanitation is regulated under the Pure Milk Law of 1917, which has been repeatedly amended and now is included in the Agricultural Code. In general, the purposes of this service are: (1) to establish a uniformly high standard of quality in dairy products in order to build a good reputation for the state's produce, (2) to protect the consuming public against unwholesome, adulterated, or misrepresented dairy products, and (3) to assure public confidence and stimulate consumption of these essential foods.

The duties embraced in this service consist of the enforcement of the laws relating to the dairy industry, except those relating to animal diseases. These laws concern the sanitary condition of premises, the composition standards of dairy products, the accuracy and fairness of butterfat testing, and the approval of municipal and county inspection departments. This enables enforcement of the law regarding the grading of milk.

**Control of Milk**

Legal standards are set up for the products and these are enforced under various programs of the Bureau of Dairy Service. Control of market milk is carried on by supervision of approved local inspection services, or under district representatives in areas where local inspection is not established. This is done by inspection of dairies, milk plants and laboratories, and the collection of samples for bacteriological and chemical determinations. In the receiving point inspection, milk and cream delivered for manufacturing purposes at milk-products plants is graded for quality. Grading projects in the state are voluntary, but all milk and cream used for manufacturing is now graded. Ice cream, butter, cheese, and general products are under control programs.

**Enforcement**

It has been found impossible to inspect all producing premises frequently enough to maintain the desirable conditions of sanitation. Therefore, with the exception of irregular inspections, enforcement is now based on examination of samples on the premise that clean products must come from clean plants. Enforcement of, and compliance with the rules have been more easily obtained by prohibitions of sale than by criminal prosecutions.

This inspection system insures production of properly labeled foods conforming
to legal standards and produced under sanitary conditions. Besides encouraging local inspection and grading, this bureau renders assistance in the framing of ordinances and cooperates with city and county health departments.

Veterinarians used in this work are employed in the capacity of supervisors and as policy makers who must understand the relationship of animal disease to human disease. Of course, in municipal milk sanitation systems the veterinarian does the collecting, testing, and sanitary inspection.

**Government Help**

Public health administration is a police power which rests with the states. The federal government, however, plays an important part in coordinating, demonstrating, investigating, and educating. The United States Public Health Service is a bureau which maintains a medical corps and other special experts. Among its functions have been those of advising local health units in matters of organization, giving financial aid, and showing them the most advantageous ways of spending what funds they have available. Veterinarians are among the experts now employed by the service and more are desired.

In the local health unit the United States Public Health Service favors a health commissioner with a division of sanitation under him. This may be administered by a veterinarian with laymen to check milk supplies and restaurants. The veterinarian would carry on the duties of meat inspector unless the unit were big enough to employ, in either a full time or a part time capacity, a second veterinarian for actual inspection work. The veterinarian then functions to settle problems and to supervise the work done by his division.

**Duties of Veterinarian**

It has been suggested that a veterinarian should be a member of the county health board to assist in bringing about a proper understanding of the relationship of animal and human disease, and to advise in the steps to be taken to control disease where animals are a factor.

A newer conception of the veterinarian in the local health work, then, is one in which he is a member of the county health unit, which was a rapidly expanding phase of public health service before the war and no doubt will resume its growth after the war. His duties will include supervision of the milk sanitation program and of the inspection of meat slaughtered in the towns within the county. A growing factor pointing toward this arrangement is the widespread use of locker plants which cannot afford meat inspection, but which could arrange slaughtering hours for the convenience of the inspector. This man also can be used for food handling and other environmental sanitation inspection.

**California Meat Inspection**

It is of interest to study the evolvement of the meat and milk sanitation programs now in effect because they will guide us in any attempts to interest new groups in this phase of public health. Referring again to the California setup one finds an orderly and logical development from the original basic system to the system now in use. The Federal Meat Inspection Law of 1906 has been followed as a pattern for the ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection, the system of sanitation, and the rules and regulations in the state laws. There have been additions to meet the many regional problems where no precedent has been established. The first statute was drawn up by the State Veterinarian in 1917 and enacted by the Legislature. It set up standards and provided state inspection in any slaughter house upon the request of the owner when certain sanitary requirements were met and fees covering the cost of inspection were paid.

In 1919 the State Department of Agriculture was created, and meat inspection was provided for as one of the subdivisions of the Division of Animal Industry. In 1921 the law was amended to eliminate all barriers existing in city ordinances by providing for recognition of state meat inspection in all marketing areas of the
state. Members of the meat industry sponsored legislation requiring mandatory inspection in almost all counties in 1931.

The Legislature has added laws requiring approval of labeling, authorizing destruction of meat and meat products improperly branded or labeled, prohibiting the use of dyes and artificial coloring, and making other changes as the need for them became apparent. Graduate veterinarians conduct all inspections although lay assistants are frequently assigned to help them. All of the employees are under civil service.

Local Systems

Milk is more obviously related to public health so the safeguards organized to insure a wholesome supply have, in all cases, originated with public health officials. Usually local officials have found control of the milk supply necessary in the prevention of milk and water-borne diseases. These systems, born of necessity, have varied with the knowledge and training of the members of the boards of health improvising them.

Commonly there are a few state laws governing elemental sanitation which are not strictly enforced. The municipal inspection system may, then, be only a beginning or it may be excellently conceived and carried out.

Statewide Control

Uniform statewide control of milk sanitation began in California under the Pure Milk Law of 1917, and was advanced by the Standardization of Dairy Products Law, and the various amendments and additional laws since passed to fill specific needs. While these fundamental laws are enforced by the state, it is the desire of the state to have the inspection of premises and market milk in the hands of local inspectors. This law also provides for the grading of market milk into classes in those communities maintaining an inspection service approved by the State Department of Agriculture. Smaller communities, and dairies supplying distant cities have only the inspection offered by the state unless they organize into districts to avail themselves of additional protection.

At the present time there are approved milk inspection services comprising districts to milk inspection services established by the department, and areas simply controlled by the department's district men.

An increased use of veterinarians in public health work will naturally follow any expansion in meat and milk sanitation since their training, more that of any other group, fits them for that purpose. The salary needed to attract veterinarians is fairly high and has perhaps delayed the development of this field to some extent. The large number of veterinary technicians trained by the army will make a pool from which may be drawn many lay inspectors. Professionally trained men may then be used to fill supervisory positions which can attract the higher salaries needed.

Need of Veterinarians

The most important question is that of determining where a veterinarian's services are needed. It is accepted that qualified men will do the inspecting and supervising in any new meat or milk sanitation systems that are established. In health departments the division of sanitation could well be administered by a veterinarian with laymen working under him. These men are needed in the inspection of poultry which at present is not done even in the best organizations.

The second question of importance concerns the means available to bring about increased inspection and cooperation with public health departments. Currently, the most common thing is for communities to adopt state drawn model ordinances covering meat or milk inspection, or an enabling act to allow the use of the milk ordinance and code recommended by the United States Public Health Service.

There is a crying need for meat and milk inspection services developed in a practical manner and applicable to those products which are consumed locally and are not moved interstate. It has often been
said that movements for sanitation must come from those affected. Actually the systems now in effect came from the outcries of public health officials, or from the producers of the manufactured goods. Only statewide uniform laws will make our food supplies safe, but local inspection is helpful until the wider supervision is effected.

Many consumers believe that their meat is federally inspected, and that the production of their milk is adequately supervised. Only an intense campaign will make the public conscious of the lack of complete sanitation. Contaminated food as a cause of disease should be publicized by local health officials, and putting before the people the improvement wrought by complete inspection would be effective.

Publicity

For this purpose newspaper publicity of the course of epidemics and milk-borne disease, motion pictures illustrating the premises producing the local supplies, and discussions before women's clubs and service organizations could be made effective. Emphasizing tie-ups with other fields would help. For example, the advantages of supervising farm slaughtering and food storage in frozen locker plants could be stressed. Also the possibility of inspection as a subsidy to maintain the veterinarian in marginal areas where he could not otherwise afford to render his services would appeal to some localities. State sanitary codes and enforcement of them is the logical end and should be promoted ceaselessly.

A Cattleman's Views On Overstocking

. . . The truth of the matter is that we are following faithfully the old well established pattern of the cattle cycle. Conditions have been "right" to accumulate cattle on our farms and ranches and we have done so.

Let us look at the conditions which are "right" for the accumulation of cattle. There are two conditions which must exist, and they must exist at the same time. The first and more important is this: There must be on hand sufficient feed to take care of the increased number of cattle; and secondly, there must be a general feeling among cattlemen that the ownership of more cattle will mean greater net profit. Consider, for instance, the case of a certain cattleman who normally runs 500 head of cattle. His business has been profitable; and he can run 25 or 30 more cattle on his ranch with practically no additional expense. When the time of the year comes to sell, if he has enough feed, he is very apt to hold over some of the old cows and a few of the young heifers that he would normally sell. There is nothing very reprehensible about that kind of thing and yet an increase of that amount spread generally over the country means an accumulation of several million head in a year's time. In this fashion our cattle numbers increase. For several years now we have had generally favorable feed supplies in both the range and feeding areas and the cattle-producing business has been profitable. Conditions have been "right" to accumulate cattle and we have done so.

I am convinced that the cattlemen who are slowly but consistently increasing the number of cattle on their farms and ranches are not only placing the entire cattle industry in a very precarious position but are also taking unwarranted chances with the success of their own individual operations. They are risking damage to their ranges and pastures which comes from excessive stocking and courting disaster which always comes to the man who is overstocked in time of drought. Surely with all the uncertainties and dangers that are in the picture today we should play the game conservatively if we are to survive. That means, above everything else, conservative stocking.

We should all of us begin immediately to cut our herds to the conservative level. The difference between conservative stocking and heavy stocking of our farms and ranches is exactly the difference between an adequate supply of cattle in this country and a dangerous oversupply . . .

—Boice, in American Cattle Producer.