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UNRRA Veterinarian's Duties

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IN ORDER to point out the duties of the veterinarian in connection with UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association) this article will consider a typical experience of an UNRRA veterinarian.

After the veterinarian leaves the Washington, D. C., headquarters, he reports to the veterinarian in charge of operations at one of the numerous livestock shipping ports. Previous to shipping out with a load of animals, the veterinarians report to the stock yard each morning at 8 and are divided in several groups.

Screening Of Animals

One of these groups screens the animals (separating sick from well), while another group works at the chutes examining animals and taking their temperatures. The sick animals are sent to pens marked hospital, surgery, lame, sale, or destroy.

In the “hospital,” animals are treated for infectious diseases. These cases consist mainly of strangles, influenza, purpura hemorrhagica, and pneumonia which is often a secondary invader when the animal’s resistance is lowered by these other diseases. The drugs used here are the best obtainable, such as penicillin in oil or saline solution, sodium sulfathiazole for intravenous use, sulfanilamide for oral administration and other recommended drugs for symptomatic treatment. Experimental work is carried on to determine the possibilities of new drugs. Blood levels as well as cultures are obtained to determine the effect on infectious organisms and the level of the drug in the blood stream.

In “surgery,” abcesses are drained, wounds treated, fistulae of the withers are opened, suppurative joint conditions resulting from strangles are treated as well as an occasional recto-vaginal fistula due to a-typical strangles and other minor surgery is performed.

In the lame pen, animals are diagnosed and treated. Those sent to the sale pen are animals requiring long time treatment which can not be carried out here. The animals to be destroyed are not in condition for sale.

When a ship is to be loaded, all the healthy animals are driven to the docks where a final screening process is completed to make sure that only healthy animals are permitted to make the trip.

Equipment Checked

The day before the ship is to be loaded, one of the two veterinarians which are to accompany the ship must check over the drug and instrument supply to insure completeness. When found satisfactory, the supplies are taken to the drug room on the ship.

UNRRA employs supervisors which are in charge of the livestock crew. These supervisors are directly responsible to veterinarians and see that hay is placed before the animals as soon as they are loaded. The animals are nervous follow-
Loading and eating helps quiet them.

Loading is generally completed in one day and the veterinarians assume their ship board duties. They must first determine the feeding schedule and ration as well as the amount of water that the animals are to receive. Two night watchmen are on duty who call a veterinarian if an animal acts strangely.

The veterinarians carry instrument and drug bags which they sling over their shoulder. Shoulder bags have been found most convenient as animals are carried both on deck and in the hold which requires much climbing up and down steel ladders.

**Daily Duties**

The working day of the veterinarians begins at 8:30 a.m. The two veterinarians divide the animals in equal sections because of the large number of animals to be observed. A tour of the ship is made each morning, after lunch and another after 8 o'clock at night. They check the mucous membranes of the eye, the nose, and the oral cavity for congestion. Temperatures are taken when possible. Sick animals are diagnosed and marked for subsequent treatment. This routine is repeated daily until the ship reaches its port of debarkation.

The weather seems to have much to do with the health of the animals. When the sea is fairly calm, and the temperature moderately cool, the animals do much better. If the ship rolls and the weather is warm, difficulties are probable.

There is no information regarding seasickmess in animals, but it has been found that the physical strain of bracing themselves and humid conditions in the hold contribute to the sickness encountered in the animals.

The veterinarians find that most of their work aboard ship is treating strangles, influenza, pneumonia, heat stroke, purpura hemorrhagica, lancing abscesses and placing tubes in the trachea when breathing is labored as a result of abscess pressure. Sulfathiazole is administered intravenously and sulfanilamide orally. There are some births and a few abortions (usually due to the rough weather). Occasionally minor surgery is necessary.

A number of animals fall down and seem unable to get up. The veterinarians have diagnosed many of these cases as complications of “epizootic cellulitis” or influenza. In addition to the usual symptoms observed, the animals are afflicted with muscular cramps, especially in the hind legs. These animals are placed in slings and treated resulting in a large percentage of recovery.

Heat stroke or heat exhaustion is encountered frequently in the summer and even some cases in the winter. Ships travelling the Mediterranean Sea have had the most trouble with heat. The best ventilation available is used but still animals in the corners of the hold are often overcome. The urine excreted by the animals is pumped out of the hold as often as possible but the ammonia given off is irritating to both man and animals. The odor seems to make the humid holds more oppressive.

Heat stroke is treated by intravenous injection of saline solution and glucose. Supportive treatment consists of pouring water over the animal’s body and giving plenty of water to drink.

Losses incurred have been remarkably light in UNRRA shipments of animals.

When the animals are discharged the ship must be cleaned and washed down in preparation for disinfection at the next loading port. The ships stay in the foreign port from 3 to 6 days during which time the UNRRA employees are able to visit the port.

On the return voyage, the veterinarians clean and repair instruments and take inventory of the supplies.

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**Montana Reported Rabies-Free**

The State Veterinary Surgeon of Montana reports that Montana is just about the safest spot in the country in which to keep animals. Cattle, sheep and swine diseases are relatively scarce, and there has not been a case of rabies in dogs reported in that state since 1925.