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Veterinary Medicine in the Hawaiian Islands

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The practice of veterinary medicine in Hawaii is comparable in many ways to practices found in the average American community with perhaps some differences caused by its subtropical climate, its inhabitants of many racial origins, its insular limitations or advantages, its specialized industries, and the size of its land area.

In brief, Hawaii is a group of eight islands of volcanic origin, situated 2,020 miles southwest of San Francisco, about eight airline hours away. Its land area is about 6,000 square miles, about one tenth the size of the state of Iowa. Its population is about 540,000 of which 267,000 are in the city of Honolulu. About 33 percent of the people are of the Caucasian races, 32 percent Japanese, and the remainder are of Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Portuguese, Korean and other races. However, the great majority of its inhabitants are American citizens. The local government and the public school system is comparable to those of the average American state, county and city. The temperature ranges between 52 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit with rainfall ranging between 20 and 200 in. per year varying by regions.

Industries

The industries of the island are predominantly agricultural with sugar and pineapples far in the lead as indicated in the following annual incomes:

- Sugar ................ $108,000,000
- Pineapple ............ 75,000,000
- Livestock ............ 19,000,000
- Coffee ................ 2,000,000

Livestock runs a poor third in the economy of the territory of Hawaii. Livestock population figures of the last few years indicate the following:

- Dairy cattle ........ 10,000 head
- Beef cattle ........ 150,000 head
- Swine ............... 60,000 head

The island imports huge amounts of beef, dairy, pork, and poultry products from the mainland of the United States annually. Dairy breeds consist of Holsteins, Guernseys and Ayrshires with most dairies situated near Honolulu on the island of Oahu. Beef cattle consist mostly of Herefords and are concentrated largely on the big island of Hawaii, with the Parker Ranch raising the majority of them on its large areas of volcanic slopes. Grazing land is relatively poor due to the fact that all areas unsuitable to sugar and pineapple cultivation are left for livestock. Practically all the cereal feed products are imported at high cost and locally produced feeds are limited to cane molasses and pineapple bran. Swine consist of Berkshire, Duroc Jersey, Tamworth and Hampshire breeds. Swine production is limited to garbage fed hogs near centers of population. The livestock industry runs a poor third in Hawaii, primarily because much or all of the limited available land and sources of water are devoted to the sugar and...
pineapple industries, and secondly due to the high cost of imported feeds. With the development of native sources of feed and improved management, the livestock industry may grow, but it is believed that sugar and pineapples will always predominate.

Veterinarians

There are nineteen veterinarians practising in Hawaii, of which eleven are residing or practicing in Honolulu. Three of these are with the United States Bureau of Animal Industry; seven are general practitioners and two are listed as small animal specialists. All veterinarians are graduates of American colleges including two from Iowa State College. Most of the practices are small, although there is one that includes several veterinarians in a mixed type of practice. There are no veterinarians on the staff of the Agriculture Experiment Station, University of Hawaii or the Extension Service. There is no meat packing enterprise in Hawaii, but there is one large plant that processes and stores meat carcasses from local sources. Small animal practice has been stimulated considerably in the last ten years by the increased interest in the pure breeds of dogs and cats.

It is difficult to say whether or not a veterinarian would have to cope with any special or peculiar problems in Hawaii as compared to one in the continental United States. Liver fluke infestations in dairy cattle is probably more prevalent in Hawaii than in most parts of the United States. The fact that one practice has to be confined more or less to the limits of each island may prove discouraging to one planning on an extensive practice. No large biological or serum companies operate in the islands, thus denying the benefits of rapid laboratory and other diagnostic services, which one takes for granted in some states. There are strict quarantine measures applied on all incoming livestock and small animals, thus providing health control measures for both animals and humans.

The opportunities for a veterinary practice in the Hawaiian islands aren't as impressive as one would probably find in Iowa or Wisconsin where the livestock industry predominates. But, like all professions, there is always room for a good man.

In their order of importance, time is devoted in veterinary practices to dairy, swine, small animals and beef cattle. Horse practice is poor and legalized horse racing has always been discouraged by the Hawaiian legislature.

In general, incomes from veterinary practices are comparable to those found in the United States where the livestock industry is of comparable scope and volume. Living standards in Hawaii are relatively high, with the cost of living slightly higher than that on the west coast of the United States.

New Beef Grades

The new standards combine prime and choice grades under the name prime, renaming the present good grade as choice and setting up a new good grade, consisting of beef from higher quality young cattle. Beef from older cattle will continue to be graded commercial.

—Country Gentleman

Cost

The cost, to the United States, of the work of the Mexican-United States Joint Commission for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease was in excess of $120,000,000 to Sept. 30, 1950. This probably did not include the value of a vast amount of equipment supplied to the commission by the U. S. Army, including the bulldozers, power shovels, entrenching machinery, armored pay cars, mobile machine shops, and unnumbered jeeps and trucks and automobiles from Chevrolets to Cadillacs.

In 1950, 17,180 purebred Hampshires were sold in 308 sales, or an average of 60 head per sale. This is a 10 percent increase in number per head in sales over any previous year. The average price paid per head was $122.

Iowa State College Veterinarian