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Editorially

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The recent trend of sentiment in the veterinary profession has been toward promoting as much favorable publicity concerning the profession as possible. Granting that we have advanced a long way since the old horse-doctor days and that promotion of this realization is desirable, an excess of publicity can be just as detrimental as the lack of it. A good public relations program should be a well-balanced combination of words and actions. No amount of glorification in print can alter the opinion of a layman when the one or two veterinarians he knows fall way short personally of the theoretical standards of ethics of the profession as a whole.

Again we are faced with the undeniable fact that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The prestige of the veterinary profession cannot be “sold” to the public unless each practitioner in the field is representative of the ideology being publicized.

Every progressive stride in the field of medicine has been accompanied by a strong tide of contradiction, aversion and resentment. Undue publicity has only served to magnify the opposition. However, credit should be given where it is due and accurate recognition is due the practitioner who is truly an asset to his community. Barring misquotations and misinterpretations, such recognition will greatly advance the status of the veterinarian as a professional man.

In an attempt to sell the “professional” angle of veterinary medicine to the public and to thereby raise the standards of ethics in our chosen field we have probably followed some unwise practices. The financial viewpoint of our profession has been oversold. The casual observer gets the impression that once a young man has survived five years of college in a school of veterinary medicine, he is set for life in a position where the work is not too demanding, financial returns are more than satisfactory and where he is responsible only to himself. Possibly this has lured young men into the veterinary colleges whose prime interests are the mighty dollar and not that of becoming a leading personality and responsible citizen of his community.

However, a carefully planned program of public relations could be profitably carried on along two lines. The most forceful campaign should be directed mainly to the brotherhood of our profession and when that is successful the subtle but deep and lasting impression of veterinarians as a group will be mirrored to the laity from each practitioner in the field, himself a living publicity campaign. The other phase of a public relations program should be aimed at the general public through a competent public relations officer who could insure release of accurate, favorable and unexaggerated publicity through films, magazines and newspapers.—H.H.