Editorially Speaking

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Shortage of Veterinarians

As the class of 1951 prepares to graduate, requests for the services of these men are voiced by graduate veterinarians, looking for partners; civic groups, trying to interest someone in establishing a practice in their community; and many county, state and federal agencies, trying to add to the growing list of men already engaged in their particular phase of the profession. It would seem then, that there is a shortage of veterinarians. One of the groups feeling this shortage to a considerable degree is the research and education field. I would like to briefly state why I think this condition exists and a few factors that might tend to change it.

1. Curriculum—Here at Iowa State College the curriculum is designed to train practitioners, and rightly so. However, if the research and educational group is to obtain an adequate share of the graduating veterinarians, in order that veterinary medicine may progress beside the medical profession and industry, some provision must be made for the students to develop an interest in the field early in their training. A suggestion which would not involve any extensive change in the curriculum is to conduct seminars in veterinary medicine much the same as they are conducted in graduate college. I feel that these would not be too far out of line since students in the third year of the curriculum have already completed 4 years of college and for all practical purposes can be considered graduate students.

2. Fellowships, scholarships and teaching salaries—Agricultural economic standards of the U.S. have been high, of late years, and as a result the standard of living of practicing veterinarians has been correspondingly high. It is my opinion that fellowships, scholarships and teaching salaries have not been raised accordingly to a degree that the average, older, post-war graduate wants to spend several additional years working up to a point where he can comfortably support his family and prepare for the future at the same time. He already feels that considerable time has been spent fighting a war and he wants to make up for lost time. Higher teaching salaries, more veterinarians to fill those good openings in private practice and younger graduates may change this picture somewhat.

3. The desire to teach—If those now engaged in teaching veterinary medicine are to induce others into that particular phase of the profession they must conduct themselves and their courses in such a manner as to be respected by students who are soon to graduate. In other words, the new graduate must want to become a part of the group, out of respect for that group.

Some of the advantages offered by research and education are as follows: (1) A regular day composed of regular working hours. (2) An income that tends to increase with age as compared to that of a practitioner whose income reaches a peak within a few years after establishing his practice and decreases as his physical well-being dictates. (3) A life devoted to work with young people of a high educational level. (4) Security through retirement plans.

Many factors have not been taken into consideration in this very brief discussion, so I would like to leave the reader with these two questions: Do you think such a shortage exists? If so, what can be done about it?

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Editor