Editorial: The Dimensions of the Veterinary Profession

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**The Dimensions of the Veterinary Profession**

F. K. Ramsey, D.V.M., Ph.D.*

Who are you? Who am I? I am a veterinarian, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, a member of a highly respected medical profession, and, I trust, a productive and useful citizen of my community. Further, I am a faculty member of a great University, a past administrator and educator in one of the finest Veterinary Colleges in the United States, and a Veterinary Pathologist. However, I must realize that our Department of Veterinary Pathology is only a part of the whole and not the whole of the College of Veterinary Medicine. Ladies and gentlemen, this last concept has been most difficult for many of us pathologists to comprehend. Also, the College of Veterinary Medicine must accept the fact that it is only a part of the whole and not the whole of the veterinary profession. In turn we, as veterinarians in our diversified types of employment in private, commercial, state, and federal sectors throughout this great state and wonderful country, must recognize that we are the key parts and that our integrated and cooperative efforts are essential for our profession to be a meaningful and productive member of society. Furthermore, each one of us must accept additional responsibilities beyond the physical bounds of our own little special area if we are to be an influential and dynamic force in our profession.

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Our veterinary heritage is a rich one and one of which we can be justly proud. It is a legacy of great scientific achievements of dedicated, courageous, visionary, and intelligent veterinarians in the field of animal diseases as to the discovery of many of their causes and the control, prevention, and eradication of many diseases of great economic importance to the livestock industry. We have inherited a profession that provides us with a high standard of living and in turn it has a most positive effect on the standards of living of all mankind. Ours is a profession that is attracting the attention of large numbers of highly qualified and eager young men and women of today. We have inherited a firm foundation on which the veterinary profession can continue to build.

"We are stewards of a profession which should be an important factor in our economic life and it is entitled to our best thought and effort. All industries and professions, especially at this time, have need for men of sober judgment, clear thought, power of analysis and dominating personality. We need to think those things which affect our relationship to our national problems through to their ultimate bearing and solution."

"We should regard ourselves as fortunate to live in a country whose social system gives everybody a chance to attain the position he or she deserves. We are builders of a
profession of human brick and stone, cemented together by professional ethics and fellowship."

Thus spoke Charles Henry Stange, a great American educator, when he delivered his presidential address to the members of the American Veterinary Medical Association in 1924.

We recognize that the vitality of our college and our veterinary profession does depend upon dialogue and interaction with all segments of our profession. Formal, organized, and intelligent input from all groups of veterinarians is essential to establish our objectives, identify our problems, evaluate our responsibilities, enumerate our opportunities, and form new and specific programs necessary for the increasing demands of society.

Our profession must establish its objectives with definite priorities in mind and chart our future course. We must recognize that there is strength in complete recognition, understanding, and thorough analysis of our weaknesses. A profession must admit that it has problems or it will never attempt to solve them. At the same time, proper assessment of our positive qualities is essential. The next step is to formulate realistic plans that we believe will lead to the achievement of our goals. Then our profession must have the courage, the integrity, the patience, and determination to see that our objectives become a reality.

The health and vigor of every professional man does depend upon constant study and keeping abreast of the latest developments in all aspects of his respective field. Our veterinary organizations and our experienced and most competent Iowa State extension veterinarians with the help of many specialists are providing you with the finest programs in continuing education. Let us understand that the viability, growth, strength, and productive capacity of us to a major extent does depend upon the unification and organization of our veterinary profession. Never in the history of veterinary medicine has there been a greater need for mature, dynamic, and outstanding leadership in our veterinary institutions and organizations as the state VMA's, IVMA, and AVMA than there is today. These organizations must be trustworthy; masters of public relationships; keenly perceptive of veterinary responsibilities; armed with rational, progressive, and meaningful facts; strongly motivated in finding solutions to significant veterinary problems; knowledgeable of state, national, and international scientific contributions in veterinary medicine and developing trends in Agribusiness that may affect animal and human health; and capable of communicating and disseminating information in an effective manner to all the constituents of our veterinary profession.

To have the type of veterinary organizations that has been outlined will cost money. It is imperative that they be properly financed and it will probably mean an increase in local, state, and national dues. If we can implement the suggestions made in the foregoing paragraph, then an increment in dues is a sound investment for each one of us to make. Finally, it becomes our responsibility to see that the local, state and national veterinary organizations perform the functions we deem them to be.

The responsibilities of the veterinary profession are:

1. To effectively, scientifically, efficiently, and completely take care of the needs of the livestock industry.
2. To provide optimum service for the livestock industry in a community.
3. To cooperate, support, and be an effective member of the public health team with the medical profession.
4. Take a vital role in finding solutions for the environmental problems of the community.
5. Take an active role in the socioeconomic problems of the community.
6. Help create and maintain an imaginative, vital, and stimulating cultural and scientific community for the well-being of all its citizens.

We are not only faced with the responsibility of graduating more veterinarians each year, including those from minority groups, but the livestock industry, state and federal agencies, commercial organizations, and the public are demanding a more highly trained and a very competent graduate. Our veterinary curriculum is being scrutinized, evaluated, and challenged. Necessity is causing many of us to discard many aspects of our outmoded and impractical teaching
philosophy. We realize that the future belongs to those who are willing to institute new and imaginative pedagogic techniques for imparting information, ideas, and concepts to the veterinary student which will be essential for him to cope with the problems of tomorrow.

A challenge of the veterinary profession is to so organize itself that it can provide the livestock owner and the public the sophisticated and complete service that it will demand. Furthermore, the livestock industry will insist that this service be not more than 30 to 40 minutes away. To cope with the magnitude of the veterinary responsibilities and professional services as needed in the future, the Blue Ribbon Committee of the IVMA believes that the establishment of some Iowa Veterinary Medical Centers in the 1980’s is inevitable.

Let our profession not be like the “alibi bird” that lives in the land of empty promises, flies backward, sits on the eggs of opportunities, and hatches out only hard luck. Instead let us reflect optimism and be enthusiastic about our profession. Take note of our successes, the medical profession has. For instance, many serious, crippling, and fatal diseases of humans have escaped the complete understanding of medical scientists. In the last decade, veterinarians have recognized and substantiated similar diseases in animals. These afflicted animals are serving as animal models of human disease. Tremendous progress is being made in understanding the etiology and pathogenesis of these baffling human and animal diseases by the cooperative and comparative studies of veterinary and medical scientists.

Have you ever wondered why an individual or an organization is successful? Probably their secret resides in the following qualities:

“Self-trust is the first secret of success.”
Emerson

“We can do anything we want to do if we stick to it long enough.”
Helen Keller

“Success is focusing the full power of all you are on what you have a burning desire to achieve.”
Wilfred A. Peterson

“Act as if it were impossible to fail.”
Dorothea Brande

“He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often, and loves much.”
Mrs. A. J. Stanley

“The way to do is to be.”
Laotzu

“I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure—which is: Try to please everybody.”
Herbert Bayard Swope

“Be sure you are right—then go ahead!”
Davy Crockett

“The first thing to do is to fall in love with your work.”
Sister Mary Lauretta

“Be a breath of fresh air—not a sour, gusty wind.”
F. K. Ramsey

Our dimensions lie in the recognition of who we are, the appreciation of our heritage, the realization that we are a small profession but can be strong and productive if we are unified and organized in the pursuit of achievement of our goals, the awareness that our skills and talents are needed by state and federal agencies, commercial enterprises, livestock industry, and the general public, and the strong conviction that we do make substantial contributions to society. In summary, the dimensions of the veterinary profession are contrived by the minds of men. They are what you and I conceive them to be. The span of the veterinary horizon is limited primarily by our own vision.

I know of no other profession that has more opportunities than we to serve humanity. We are living in exciting and challenging times.