

THE NEED FOR FEDERAL SUPPORT OF VETERINARY MEDICAL EDUCATION

Citizens who are genuinely concerned with our nation's total health and welfare, recognizes an emerging national emergency created by the extreme shortage of veterinarians. The obvious answer is to expand the colleges of veterinary medicine in a manner which will enable them to accommodate the large numbers of young men and women who apply for admission. Facilities and operational support are not adequate even for the students currently enrolled in the veterinary medical colleges in this country.

At one of the oldest and well-established colleges of veterinary medicine, 50 per cent of the professional students and a large portion of the faculty are located in temporary space in the university's garage. That college is awaiting funds to become available for construction of teaching and research facilities. Equipment for instruction is either antiquated or so limited as to handicap the laboratory instruction in many schools. Their faculty and technical personnel are being lost to colleges of medicine, industry and government laboratories in the fierce competition for veterinary medical manpower.

Eighteen colleges in seventeen states carry the burden of supplying the nation's veterinarians. Each of these colleges is accredited by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association, and their graduates are eligible to take state and national board examinations in veterinary medicine, dentistry and surgery; but the number of veterinarians graduated each year from all colleges totals only about 1,000.

Six to eight years of university education is required for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. The courses required are nearly identical to those required for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, except that all species of animals except man are considered.

After two to four years of pre-veterinary medical education in the university, students may apply for admission to the College of Veterinary Medicine where an additional four years of professional education is required before the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine is awarded. During the past sixteen years at The Ohio State University, 66 to 75 percent of the well-qualified applicants for admission to the College of Veterinary Medicine could not be accepted because the college has inadequate facilities and faculty to accommodate more students. For the same reasons, during the past sixteen years, 89 per cent of the Doctors of Veterinary Medicine were refused admission to the Ph. D. programs in one of the departments.

The deficiencies in veterinary manpower are assuming alarming proportions. The number of professional students in the nation's colleges of veterinary medicine must be increased by two- to three-fold if a national emergency is to be avoided.

The following is a quotation from a report in the 1961 proceedings of the American Association of Land Grant Colleges and State Universities:

The best estimates based on current needs indicate that the number of veterinarians in the country should be tripled by 1980. . . . in order to accomplish this . . . the capacity of all the present veterinary colleges must be doubled and at least five new veterinary colleges established immediately. In response to an overwhelming demand for graduates, most veterinary colleges are now developing means of accommodating more qualified applicants by increasing class size, or moving toward year-round teaching programs.

Estimates have also indicated that a 300 per cent increase in the number of veterinarians in the many specialties in veterinary medicine will be needed by 1975.

Achievement of minimal goals for increased enrollment in the Colleges of Veterinary Medicine and maintenance of the quality of professional education requires vastly increased financial support. Experience has clearly demonstrated that adequate funds for development and expansion are not and will not be provided by the states in which the nation's eighteen veterinary medical colleges are located. Since these colleges must educate veterinarians for the entire nation, federal support of their development and expansion is clearly justified. The efforts of veterinarians to maintain animal health and directly and indirectly to promote human health justify the contention that veterinary education is as deserving of federal support as any other health profession for which provisions have already been made in the Health Professions Educational Assistance Act. Insufficient funds have handicapped educators' attempts to adapt modern principles of education—such as classroom use of computers, closed circuit television, and auto-didactic or autotutorial laboratories—to veterinary medical education.