

# The United States Army Veterinary Corps

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Not infrequently one is asked about the Army Veterinary Service, about its history, the work a veterinarian in the Army performs, what the Army has to offer the veterinarian as a career. Therefore, an effort will be made in this article to provide answers to these questions, and present other information pertaining to the Army Veterinary Service which it is hoped will be of interest.

The Army Veterinary Service consists of the Veterinary Corps, a corps of commissioned officers, composed of graduates of schools of veterinary medicine approved by the Surgeon General, and enlisted personnel of the Veterinary Service, Medical Department. That such was not always the case will be evident from a concise summary of the history of the veterinarian in the Army.

The first mention of a veterinarian (veterinary surgeon), as such, in the United States Army appears in an 1848 act of Congress which provided for the hire of veterinary surgeons. Later the veterinary surgeon appeared among the noncommissioned grades; there were six veterinarians with the grade of master sergeant during the Civil War. The lot of the Army veterinarian improved following the Spanish American War.

The "embalmed beef" scandal and the high loss of animals—both attributed to the lack of an adequate veterinary service—supplied the necessary impetus. The year 1901 brought provision for 42 veterinarians—two with each regiment of cavalry and one with each regiment of artillery—with the pay and allowances of second lieutenant, and saw the first veteri-

arian assigned to the office of the Commissary General (later consolidated with the Quartermaster Corps) for the purpose of inspecting meats purchased for the Army. The same year saw the provision for hiring veterinarians by the Quartermaster Corps for the care of animals and the inspection of meats, with pay at \$100 a month. Veterinarians of cavalry and artillery were accorded the honor of salutes from enlisted men in 1902.

The most important advance for the veterinarian then in the Army occurred 15 years later. The National Defense Act of 3 June 1916 provided for the establishment of the Veterinary Corps as a part of the Medical Department of the Army, with an authorized strength of 118 officers. The act also provided for a Veterinary Corps Reserve. This law provided initial appointment in the grade of second lieutenant, with promotion to first lieutenant, captain, and major after 5, 15 and 20 years' service, respectively.

The nucleus of the corps was established by the commissioning, in grades of second lieutenant to major, of the better qualified veterinarians serving with cavalry, field artillery and employed by the Quartermaster Corps. On April 11, 1917, five days after the beginning of World War I, 62 of these veterinarians had been commissioned in the Regular Army. By early September 1917 the remaining vacancies in the Veterinary Corps were filled by appointing 56 veterinarians in the grade of second lieutenant. These appointees were largely from the graduating classes of 1915 to 1917. Thus, the Veterinary Corps was created by the

act of June 3, 1916, as an integral part of the United States Army. This was the culmination of a long extended effort on the part of the American Veterinary Medical Association to obtain recognition and a commissioned status for Army veterinarians.

Since the birth of the corps much progress has been made in further improving the status of the veterinary service and those comprising the corps of veterinary officers. Briefly, the highlights in this advance have been: Amendment of the National Defense Act of 1916 on June 4, 1920 authorizing veterinary officers in grades from second lieutenant to that of colonel, and decreasing the time required in grade for promotion. As indicated in a preceding paragraph, under the provisions of the act of 1916 the veterinary officer could not advance beyond the grade of major and attain it only after completing 20 years of service, whereas under modification of the National Defense Act in 1920, promotion to the grade of major was made after 14 years of service, to lieutenant colonel after 20 years, and to colonel upon completing 26 years of service. In 1919, authority was granted in a General Order for the assignment of enlisted personnel to the Veterinary Service, Medical Department, by enlistment in or transfer thereto.

Initial appointment of veterinarians in the Regular Army in the grade of first lieutenant was authorized under an Act of Congress approved July 31, 1935. Although the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 (Public Law 381—80th Congress, which provides for the promotion of officers of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps) basically prescribes the entering grade in the Veterinary Corps Regular Army as second lieutenant, and service in that grade for one year only, actually under the regulations governing eligibility for appointment in the Veterinary Corps it is possible the veterinarian might never serve in the grade of second lieutenant. It would depend on whether he entered the Reserve Corps and active duty immediately following graduation—then one year in the grade of second lieutenant is mandatory—or accepted a

commission in the Reserve Corps one year subsequent to graduation and entered active duty; in the latter case the individual would be a first lieutenant. Inasmuch as the present policy of making appointments to fill vacancies in the Veterinary Corps of the Regular Army, is the competitive tour method of one year active duty in the Veterinary Corps Reserve, appointment would be in the grade of first lieutenant.

The next date of historical significance occurred in April 1942 when the Director, Veterinary Division, Office of the Surgeon General, Colonel R. A. Kelser, was promoted to the grade of brigadier general in the Army of the United States. Further recognition of the veterinary profession and the Army Veterinary Service came with the passage of Public Law 381, 80th Congress, an act approved on Aug. 7, 1947, which provided, for the first time in history, the permanent grade of brigadier general for the Veterinary Corps, Regular Army. An appointment in that grade was made, being confirmed by the Senate of the United States on Jan. 24, 1948.

Briefly stated, the twofold mission of the Veterinary Corps is first to protect the health of the Army by the sanitary inspection of food products of animal origin during preparation, processing, shipment, storage, and issue; by the sanitary inspection of all places in which such products are prepared, processed, shipped, stored, or issued; and by the inspection of such products to determine their general quality and compliance with purchase requirements; to protect the health and preserve the physical efficiency of the animals of the Army.

The mission of the Veterinary Corps has not changed since its establishment, only changing conditions in the nation and reflected in the operation of the Armed Forces has resulted in a re-evaluation of the importance of the functions and duties involved in accomplishment of the mission.

In World War I, with an Army of approximately 4 million men and about 475,000 animals, somewhere near 90 percent of the 2,234 veterinarians in the service were engaged in work with

mounted units and about 10 percent in food inspection.

Some years after World War I, when the Army began to abandon animal transport in favor of motorization and mechanization, many observers felt the Veterinary Corps would gradually be relegated to a place of minor significance in the military organization. Obviously, these observers were thinking only in terms of the veterinarian's duties with animals; they did not consider the growing need for Army food inspection or anticipate the tremendous demands that would be made on the veterinary service in meeting that need. In fact, when motorization and mechanization came into large scale use the demands of the service already made it necessary to detail the greater number of veterinary personnel to meat and dairy inspection, either full or part time. By the time World War II occurred food inspection constituted the major work of the Army Veterinary Service. It is interesting to note that the percentage of veterinary officers engaged in food inspection during World War II was 85 to 90, while 10 to 15 percent of the total were on duty in connection with animal service. The maximum number of veterinary officers in service at any one time during 1941-45 was approximately 2,200.

This expansion of the scope and activities of the veterinarian is not limited to the veterinary service of the Army. The importance and the position of the veterinarian in public health has been recognized for many years. The demand for veterinarians either on a full time or part time basis in the field of food inspection is increasing. I say, without reservation, that no other profession or group of individuals begins to approach the veterinarian's skill in inspecting foods of animal origin. The basic professional education of the present-day veterinarian permits him to adapt himself quickly to this specialized field, as was amply shown during World War II. The excellent record of the Veterinary Corps during the period of the past war was made possible principally by the fine work of Reserve veterinarians called to active duty during

the emergency.

It would be rather difficult to present in an article of this nature a detailed account of the organization and operation of the Army Veterinary Service, with the many ramifications incident to the overall Army organization and command responsibility. Veterinary service is provided where required, within the limit of personnel available, in the United States and in overseas theaters.

The assignment of a veterinary officer may be to an organization designed for service in the field in support of combat. These units are organized on the general premise to operate in areas in which conditions are of widely varying character. Organic personnel and equipment are prescribed. Examples of these units are numbered Veterinary Food Inspection Detachments and Veterinary Evacuation Hospitals. These units are relatively few, even in war. Most of the veterinary officers on duty with the Department of the Army or the Air Force are assigned to posts, camps, and stations for duty not only at the post, but, as required, in areas contiguous thereto for the purpose of conducting the inspecting of foods of animal origin procured by the Army for the Armed Forces. Or, when military necessity requires, veterinary officers are located in cities—there being no military post or camp adjacent to the area of operation—performing their duties within a prescribed area. The latter may be within the metropolitan limits or include a larger area.

To perform the functions and carry out the responsibilities chargeable, a senior veterinary officer is assigned the headquarters of each major command and to other key installations. As a staff officer he advises the commanding officer on matters pertaining to the operation of the Army Veterinary Service, including veterinary personnel, and exercises technical supervision over all veterinary activities within that command. To illustrate: In each of the six Army Areas a veterinary officer is assigned to the Army headquarters. He is responsible to the Army Surgeon, who represents the Medical Department on the staff of the Army Com-

mander, for conducting the veterinary service in that command. The amount of veterinary personnel under his supervision and the extent of the veterinary activities in each Army Area vary due to several factors, such as geographic location in relation to procurement, concentration of processing plants, general depots of distribution, and the number of military installations.

The Air Force likewise assigns a veterinary officer to supervise the veterinary service within each of the major Air Force commands.

Veterinary detachments or units may be located at a post, camp, or other military installation such as a Quartermaster Depot, Quartermaster Market Center, Headquarters Military District.

The duties of a veterinary officer may and do vary from a combination of animal service and food inspection service to full-time duties in connection with the inspection of foods of animal origin and the supervision of the sanitation of establishments (other than those under the supervision of the Bureau of Animal Industry) in which such foods are processed. In the laboratory service, the veterinary officer so assigned works entirely in that field. Irrespective of assignment, the duties of a veterinary officer as such are professional, advisory and administrative. In certain assignments, especially TO&E units, he will also have the responsibility of command of the veterinary unit.

There are special assignments which must be filled by veterinary officers. One is special military missions in certain foreign countries where the veterinary officer assigned acts as a adviser and assists in establishing or re-establishing a veterinary service, particularly animal service involving prevention of disease, treatment, and hospitalization facilities. Another assignment requiring a number of veterinary officers is that with Military Government in the Far East. These officers are engaged in advising, supervising, and assisting in the re-establishment of all phases of veterinary medicine in Japan and Korea.

Having briefly and broadly outlined the Army Veterinary Service, a brief

discussion of procurement, grade, promotion, retirement, and other features affecting the career of a veterinary officer follows: The policy now in effect prescribes that a veterinarian to be eligible for appointment in the Veterinary Corps, Regular Army, must demonstrate his fitness by serving a Competitive Tour of continuous active duty for one year, and be recommended for appointment by the commanding officer under whom the duty was performed. The candidate must be on active duty as a Veterinary Corps Reserve officer at the time of entering upon the Competitive Tour, and not have reached his 32nd birthday when beginning the Competitive Tour. Regulations require that a candidate must have two years to serve at the time the Competitive Tour commences.

Each applicant at time of appointment in the Veterinary Corps, Regular Army, must be a male citizen of the United States, and must have reached his twenty-first birthday, but not his thirty-second birthday, except that those applicants who passed their thirty-second birthday, may be appointed if the number of years, months, and days elapsed after their thirty-second birthday does not exceed five and is less than or equal to the number of years, months, and days of active Federal commissioned service performed in the Army of the United States or any component thereof after December 31, 1947. The applicant must be a graduate of a school of veterinary medicine approved by the Surgeon General of the Army.

In general, it is true that appointment in the Regular Army is in the grade of second lieutenant. However, in the Medical Department, constructive service credit is given on the basis of the additional years required to qualify for a degree in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. An officer appointed in the Veterinary Corps, Regular Army, receives two years' constructive service. Thus, he enters the Army as a second lieutenant serving one year in that grade followed by four years in the grade of first

lieutenant. As all commissioned Federal active service in the Army is credited, the veterinary officer would be at least a first lieutenant when entering the Regular Army following his Competitive Tour for qualification.

The veterinary officer is eligible for and promoted to the permanent grades of captain, major, and lieutenant colonel at the end of 5, 12 and 19 years' active service, respectively. He may be promoted into each of the grades after a lesser amount of service if vacancies exist and if he is found qualified. The veterinary officer is eligible for selection and appointment to the grade of colonel after serving one year in the grade of lieutenant colonel for all branches of the Army. Therefore, promotion into this grade is contingent upon a vacancy existing in the grade.

Training as used in this article is intended to convey the preparation of the veterinary officer for not only his current military position, but also for future assignments and increased responsibilities. Thus, his training must be progressive and continuing. It includes on-the-job training, special assignments, attendance at civilian and/or military schools. The assignment and training of officers are phased into periods beginning with the officer's entry in the Regular Army. There are four periods of training in the Veterinary Corps career pattern, namely: basic, specialized, general and command and staff administrative assignment.

The entry of the officer into each period is governed by his years of service, and, furthermore, his eligibility for specialized training by demonstrated ability, aptitude, and his desire to pursue such study in a specialized field. All officers will be required to take basic training during the first three years of service. This will include the courses given at the Medical Department Field Service School and at the Medical Department Meat and Dairy Hygiene School. Selected officers only will receive training in specialized fields by attending advanced

courses given at a civilian college and/or a military school.

For example: A veterinary officer in the field of laboratory medicine has shown ability and aptitude; further training in a special phase of that field is deemed necessary so he is sent to a civilian institution for a year. Perhaps another officer is sent to a university to take the Public Health Course.

Since the assignment of veterinary officers to fill positions of responsibility in the higher staff and administrative echelons is required, provision exists for such training in the Advanced Branch course, the Command and Staff College, for example, in addition to on-the-job training. That other opportunities exist for specialized training is evidenced by the fact that each veterinary officer currently on duty as assistant PMS&T is enrolled for postgraduate work in the college or university to which assigned.

Remuneration in the Army includes base pay, longevity increases, and allowances. Base pay is that which pertains to grade and for which a minimum and maximum is prescribed in each grade. Thus, as an officer is promoted through the various grades to that of colonel, an automatic increase in base pay ensues. Pay is also influenced by length of service. The law prescribes a 5 percent increase in pay for each three years of active commissioned service up to 30 years' total service. This is known as longevity pay or colloquially termed in the Army a "fogey."

Allowances are prescribed by law for rental and subsistence. The amount received is governed by the grade in which serving, length of service, and whether or not the officer has dependents. It is greater for those with dependents. Rental allowance is not authorized when government quarters are furnished. To illustrate what has preceded, let us consider a major of the Veterinary Corps with over 12 but less than 15 years' service. He is married but does not occupy government quarters. His base pay as a major is \$3,300 per annum; longevity in-

creases add \$660; with dependents his rental allowance is \$1,260 and subsistence \$756 annually. A major in this category therefore receives a total of \$5,976. Or, let us consider a first lieutenant, married, and with less than three years' service. He would receive \$2,400 base pay, rental \$1,080 and subsistence \$504, or a total annual salary of \$3,984.

While it is true that opportunity does exist in civil life for greater direct cash remuneration, and that the pay is not commensurate with the responsibilities and demands made on the Army officer, there are features which make a career in the Army not only attractive but worth consideration. Briefly, these are free medical and dental care, including hospitalization, and, when practicable, for the members of the officer's immediate family, government life insurance at excellent rates, commissary privileges, retirement for physical disability incurred in line of duty in any grade, optional retirement after 20 years' service at the rate of 2½ percent of the base and longevity pay of the grade in which retired for each year of service, which is limited to 75 percent; retirement at the end of 30 years' service with three-fourths of the base and longevity pay of the grade in which retired. Normally this retirement is in the grade of colonel for the majority of officers.

It will be apparent that with each year of service in the Army the equity of the officer is increasing and he can look forward to a modest security on retirement from active service.

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There is not a better word in the English language than veterinarian to identify members of our profession. In the interest of proper recognition, it should be used in lieu of any other designation when reporting to the press.

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Pies once were considered an exotic delicacy reserved only for the rich and powerful. During the fifteenth century in Scotland, parliament banned pie eating by anybody below the rank of baron.

## Veterinary Service In Wartime

During both the Civil and Spanish-American Wars (prior to the organization of the United States Army Veterinary Corps) terrific losses of animals were experienced. By way of contrast, during World War II, not a single animal plague occurred among the many thousands of horses, mules, war dogs, and pigeons which were used in military operations by our troops. Further, through the activities of the United States Army Veterinary Corps, the United States was able to maintain its fortunate position of remaining free from 15 livestock maladies of major importance in the world.

Appointment in the Veterinary Corps Reserve and the Veterinary Corps Regular Army is limited to graduates of schools of veterinary medicine approved by the Surgeon General of the Army. The following schools in North America have been approved: Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama; Colorado A & M College, Fort Collins, Colorado; Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa; Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas; Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan; New York State Veterinary College, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio; Ontario Veterinary College, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada; University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Texas A & M College, College Station Texas; State College of Washington, Pullman, Washington.

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