

The Veterinarian And The Farm Bureau

C. D. Van Houweling, D. V. M.

About six months ago, four officers of the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association requested a conference with some of the officials of the Illinois Agricultural Association, which is the state farm bureau organization. A story on successful swine raising had appeared in the Illinois Agricultural Association's publication the Record. One of the pictures published with the story showed a group of farmers vaccinating their own pigs. The veterinarians felt, that, in addition to this picture, some of the advertising the Farm Bureau Serum Association had been using in the Record was objectionable.

When the veterinarians called attention to this picture and some of the advertising and explained that was not conducive to developing better relations, the IAA officials could understand their viewpoint. The president of the veterinary association explained that several of their members had complained about these advertisements and the picture and that some of them had even raised the question whether or not the IAA was really sincere in their declared desire to improve relations. It was explained that the relationship implications of the material were probably not recognized by IAA personnel. They assured the veterinarians that they were sincere in their desire to maintain a healthy relationship with the veterinary profession and that they would try to see in the future that such impediments to good relations did not appear.

Mr. Charles B. Shuman, president of

the IAA, said as the veterinarians were leaving after this two-hour conference, "Come in anytime you have something like this to discuss. We surely prefer to discuss these differences around the conference table." Officials of both associations were enthusiastic about agreements that had been reached.

The story of this conference illustrates the present status of relationship between the veterinary profession and organized agriculture in Illinois.

The Illinois Agricultural Association is the largest state farm organization in the United States, having almost 160,000 members. In many counties upwards of 80 percent of all farmers are members. It is recognized as being one of the most influential organizations in the state and particularly is this true insofar as agricultural legislation is concerned. Obviously, it is advantageous for the veterinary profession in Illinois to maintain good relations with the IAA. For many years, however, the relationship was anything but good.

The trouble started 25 or 30 years ago when farmers first started to do their own vaccinating for hog cholera. The farm bureau was striving to increase its membership by rendering services to members. The supplying of hog cholera anti-serum and virus was a service often requested. As a result, most of the county farm bureaus began to sell these products to members. The farm advisers, as the county agricultural agents are known in Illinois, often demonstrated the use of serum and virus and, in some cases,

actually vaccinated hogs for members. Later a state-wide company, The Illinois Farm Bureau Serum Association, was organized as a farm cooperative and has operated as a procurer and supplier of these biologics for county farm bureaus in the state ever since.

Veterinarians vigorously opposed this movement by the farm bureaus at the time. Attempts were made, without success, to reconcile the differences that arose. The farm bureaus continued to sell these products and veterinarians continued to condemn them for it. For about two decades that was the situation in Illinois.

In the early part of this decade, Dr. C. E. Fidler, who was then state veterinarian, and the officers of the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association began to confer with officials of the IAA. Perhaps it was somewhat of a surprise to both groups to find that they could work together on many problems.

The State Department of Agriculture was extending and intensifying a campaign against brucellosis at about this time. The farm advisers and the county farm bureaus were asked to help expand the program. The educational and organizational parts of the program were carried on largely by them. In some cases, the county office for the brucellosis work was located in the farm bureau office and much of the clerical work was conducted by farm bureau personnel. This cooperative endeavor made it apparent that much could be accomplished by working together.

Concurrently, the officers of the veterinary medical association were trying to get the Veterinary Practice Act revised. The IAA actively supported this movement, and revisions were effected in the practice law. During this period, the veterinary profession and organized agriculture also worked together to establish a college of veterinary medicine at the University of Illinois.

The ever increasing number of animal diseases and the consequent need for accurate differential diagnosis, coupled with the greatly expanded program of the

county farm bureaus has caused the average farm adviser in Illinois to rely more and more on veterinarians. Because of this reliance on veterinarians, the leading farm advisers in Illinois began to ask, "Why not have a veterinarian on the staff of the IAA?" At the 1945 annual meeting of the IAA, the Board of Directors was authorized to employ a veterinarian. Before proceeding to locate a veterinarian, the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association Executive Board was consulted.

Mr. Paul E. Mathias, secretary of the



Dr. C. D. Van Houweling, I.S.C. '42, formerly the Director of Veterinary Medicine Relations for the Illinois Agricultural Association. He has recently joined the AVMA executive staff to aid in professional relations.

IAA, made the proposal to Dr. L. A. Dykstra, president of the ISVMA at the time. Mr. Mathias said, "The Board of Directors of the IAA has been authorized to place a veterinarian on the staff. Before we go ahead, we want the Executive Board of your association to consider it and give us your opinion."

Dr. Dykstra first asked, "What will the duties of the veterinarian be?"

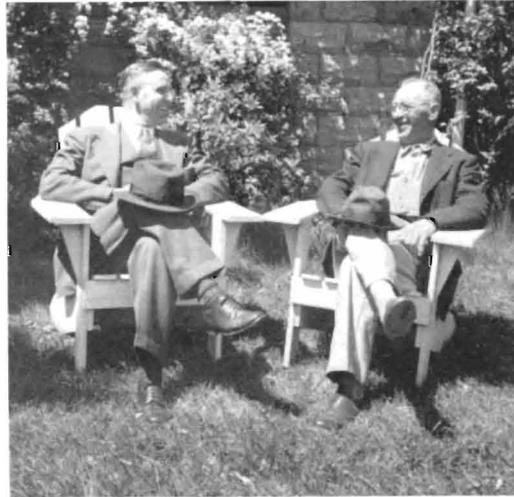
"We want him to serve as a technical adviser to the IAA and its affiliated companies and to assist in whatever educational work needs to be done. Of course, we think he can help develop better relations between the farm bureau and the veterinarians and we expect him to work along that line. We realize that we need good veterinarians to help our livestock producers and we want to encourage them to locate in Illinois."

Dr. Dykstra reported this conversation to the Executive Board, and they approved of the idea. They also agreed to make recommendations to the IAA as to who might be qualified for the position.

That briefly is the history of the department of veterinary medical relations of the IAA.

As director of this department of the IAA and working with its affiliated companies, my opinion was often asked on matters that related to animal diseases and relations with veterinarians. For example, when legislation was introduced to modify the state brucellosis law, the Legislative Committee asked for an opinion on the changes and asked me to get the opinion of others. The Cooperative Locker Association was considering legislation which would require inspection of slaughtering establishments and asked for an appraisal of the bill. Since the bill did not provide for ante or post mortem inspection its weaknesses were pointed out. The law was tabled for the session. These are two examples in the legislative field. There were many similar questions, and it was advantageous to the veterinary profession as well as agricultural interests to have available the counsel of a veterinarian.

Most livestock raisers are intensely interested in animal diseases and are anxious to know more about their control and prevention. The farm advisers in Illinois have had for years extension veterinarians from the University of Illinois come to the counties and discuss animal diseases before farmers. I received many similar calls as a staff member of the IAA.



Dr. Van Houweling discusses animal health problems with a member of the Farm Bureau.

Since it was our objective to develop improved relations between farm bureaus, farm advisers and veterinarians, as well as to present interesting, worthwhile discussions of the diseases, farm advisers were urged to invite local veterinarians to these meetings. The farm advisers were glad to have local veterinarians attend. Usually, veterinarians were issued personal invitations. When the practitioners from the community were at these meetings, we always let them answer as many questions as possible. In some cases, the meeting program was organized as a panel discussion. Practicing veterinarians, farm advisers, and farmers all seemed to enjoy these meetings and participated freely in the discussions.

As a result of these meetings, some of the farm advisers set up programs where the entire discussions were by the local veterinarians. These meetings, too, were well received and served to bring the veterinarians closer to the farmers and their organization. In some counties, mastitis control programs for the dairymen in the county were planned cooperatively by local veterinarians, farm bureau workers, and milk quality control field men. By getting together for discussions in small groups, the agricultural workers and veterinarians saw how much they

really had in common and how they could assist each other.

These so-called extension or educational meetings can be wonderful opportunities for developing good relations and furthering cooperation when properly handled.

A unique meeting in Illinois, and for that matter probably unique in any state, was the September, 1948, Central Illinois Veterinary Medical Association meeting in Springfield. This meeting was designated as Agricultural Night. The farm advisers and farm bureau presidents of surrounding counties were guests. Guests and members were liberally interspersed during the banquet preceding the program so that everyone made new acquaintances. Representatives from the Farm Advisers' Association, the IAA, the ISVMA, and AVMA were asked to express their opinions of the meeting and the possibility of future cooperation between veterinarians and agricultural organizations. The Director of Agriculture for the state discussed the necessity of this cooperation as a climax to the program. It was unanimously agreed that the meeting was a grand success and that it should be repeated.

Numerous other examples could be cited of the fine spirit of cooperation that exists in most parts of Illinois between the veterinarians and the farm advisers and the farm bureaus. However, I believe that the examples I have related suffice to demonstrate the effectiveness of that relationship.

Calf Hygiene

Dr. W. J. Gibbons of Alabama Polytechnic Institute says that housing and feeding are the two most important "hygienic" factors in the prevention of calf diseases.

Calves should be raised in small isolated groups, according to Dr. Gibbons. In this way, he says, infections are more easily limited and controlled. If all calves in any one group are approximately the same age, the danger of exposure to disease can be further reduced.

Nutritional Deficiencies

Thousands of farm animals are victims of borderline starvation, says the A.V.M.A. committee on nutrition. The committee recommends that each state and regional veterinary association appoint a group to work on the problem and to draw attention to it.

Sometimes the animals appear to be well nourished, although they may actually be suffering from borderline starvation. This is caused by the lack of certain necessary elements. Some of the more common examples are:

Vitamin A deficiency in cattle where they do not have access to green grass.

Calcium deficiency in dairy and feedlot cattle.

Protein deficiency in cattle herds where protein supplements are not adequate.

Phosphorus deficiency throughout most of the North American cattle raising regions.

Cobalt deficiency in southwestern, northwestern and northern parts of the United States and parts of Canada.

Widespread **Iodine** deficiency in the north and northwest. Losses are particularly heavy among younger animals.

Seasonal Diseases

The AVMA committee on transmissible diseases of food-producing animals reports that the number of these diseases varies markedly with the seasons.

The committee reported that 47 diseases attack cattle in the fall, compared with 35 in the spring, 30 in the summer and 43 in the winter. Pigs are faced by 32 diseases in the fall, 30 in the spring, 28 in the winter and 28 in the summer.

There are 28 diseases which may affect sheep in the winter, as compared with 18 in the spring, 15 in the summer and 26 in the fall months.

An ancient measurement was a "cubit," meaning the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.