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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Ideas and Observations Concerning the Present State of Veterinary Medicine

DEAR SIR:

It seems that never before has a new graduate in veterinary medicine been so well trained, but never before has a new graduate in veterinary medicine been so poorly equipped to cope with the marketplace upon graduation. For several years, veterinarians have voiced a common statement: "I find it very difficult to utilize a new graduate to advantage until he or she has had at least one year's experience".

My thoughts concern primarily food animal veterinary medicine, however, judging from comments heard from veterinarians in all disciplines of the art, they are applicable to all facets of veterinary medicine. Presently, the cornerstone of food animal practice is fertility work: pregnancy testing and bull evaluation. I cannot use a new graduate in my practice for pregnancy diagnoses or to evaluate bulls for my clients. Why? The producer, a very intelligent individual, is an economist under severe financial pressure. As the availability of competent, more experienced personnel has greatly increased in the last few years as opposed to a few years ago when, by and large, the client had to take

whoever was available. Now he asks for, and obtain, a veterinarian with experience. The same factor is involved in almost all facets of food animal practice because most veterinary medicine now involves multiple, not single, units and from the producer's viewpoint it is uneconomical to go with inexperience.

The state of the art, veterinary medicine, has to change dramatically. The direction must be herd-health oriented, as so-called fire engine practice does not, and will not, afford sufficient remuneration nor employment for veterinarians.

Implementation of a system of internship or externship is surely necessary. Merit rating practices or institutions, and developing remuneration systems are not necessary — they will automatically evolve because the young people in our veterinary colleges are bright, intelligent, and realistic who are desirous to play a useful and productive role in society. They will find legitimate and informal ways of merit rating competency. Financially, they will accept reasonable remuneration in order to develop their skills. The students in our colleges are as frustrated about tomorrow, probably more so than we are. They are becoming impatient and angry with us, the so-called experienced, continu-

ally bombarding them with polite and impolite words and phrases as to what they are not, but not offering constructive suggestions to assist them in their plight.

Some changes must take place in our education system for veterinarians. I am adamantly opposed to lengthening the course time, and to starting specialization in the last year. Four years of basics are absolutely necessary for our complicated science and many of us set our sights on one facet of veterinary medicine and later change our discipline somewhere down the road. Now — the formal training at a veterinary college should be one year prevet — four year DVM course — one year internship for all graduates in whichever discipline they choose. All who are interested in veterinary medicine realize changes are necessary. Course modifications would be the cornerstone of many subsequent changes.

We must implement transformation in order that veterinary medicine again becomes more positive rather than in its present state — like the albatross who while flying slowly in ever diminishing circles, vanished up . . .

Yours sincerely,  
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