

The older veterinarians here will recollect that, prior to the discovery of tuberculin, much attention was paid, both by teachers and practitioners, to the clinical diagnosis of bovine tuberculosis. Of late years this phase of practice has been almost entirely lost sight of, the younger men practically depending on tuberculin as a diagnostic. This state of affairs is regrettable and should be remedied by cultivating, with regard to cases of tuberculosis, that habit of painstaking observation which alone makes for success in the diagnosis of most of the other maladies to which dumb animals are subject.

I might perhaps explain that the foregoing remarks on the necessity of care and exactitude in making tests are intended to emphasize the idea that only skillful and specially trained men can with safety be employed in this work, no small difficulty in itself, when it comes to undertaking a universal and compulsory testing policy.

There is still more to be said against compulsory testing and slaughter. Many reactors are but slightly affected, and while in the case of beef cattle in good condition the loss from their slaughter may be insignificant, it is a very different matter when valuable pure-bred herds or even common grade stock, thin in flesh, are condemned. It is true that with the latter the question of compensation may be more easily settled than with the former, but the matter of economic waste is only one of degree, for while the pure-bred reactors might live out their natural lives and produce much valuable and, with proper precautions, healthy stock, the thin grades might be fattened and slaughtered under careful supervision for purposes of human food.

For the reasons given above I am convinced that, at least on any large scale, the policy of compulsory testing and slaughter is not a practicable one.

Turning to the policy of voluntary testing, or testing in response to applications from owners, now followed in certain of the United States and in several of the countries of Europe, I would point out that not only do most of the arguments against compulsory testing apply to it with equal force, but several other factors come up for consideration. Among these perhaps the most important is the fact that in testing only those herds in a country which are voluntarily submitted to the authorities, the progress made in the direction of eradicating tuberculosis must, of necessity, be not only very slow but very uncertain. Even Professor Bang admits that, under the experience of repeated and often disappointing tests, the patience and courage of our Danish friends not unfrequently fail and they become weary of well-doing and relapse into carelessness.

This phase of the matter is one which must be taken into account and when with it is considered the fact that the last to ask for the test are, as a rule, the breeders of pure-bred stock, whose herds are the principal agents in disseminating disease, the ultimate ineffectiveness of voluntary testing is pretty clearly demonstrated. Owners must obtain fresh blood from time to time and unless a man is heart and soul with the authorities in their efforts to clean up his herd and takes every possible and minute precaution accordingly, it is, so long as tuberculosis exists in the country, only a matter of time until his stock relapses into a condition of disease.

In this connection I have read with much interest the plan proposed by Dr. Niven, Medical Health Officer of Manchester, and supported by Professor Delapine and Mr. Brittlebank, the chief veterinary officer of that city, which includes the forming of disease-free islands by eradicating tuberculosis from certain farms and gradually extending the work over small districts, to be still further enlarged as the system finds favour with stock owners.

While there are some features of the scheme, such as the spending of public money in specially selected localities to the exclusion of other taxpayers and the supplying of sanitary buildings, through bringing pressure to bear on landlords or otherwise, which are scarcely applicable to conditions in America, it is, in my opinion, much more sensible and likely to be productive of ultimate benefit than the diffuse policy of promiscuously testing a herd here or there.