

Business of Supply

Government of Canada back in 1867. Since that time our animal and health protection standards have gained worldwide envy. The need to maintain this position and to advance with modern scientific and technological achievements has been recognized by the passing of the Animal Contagious Diseases Act. However, the responsibility attending such legislation can only be effectively discharged by utilizing adequate numbers of competent and skilled professional staff. But, despite increased responsibility of the veterinary staff of the Health of Animals Branch, there are at present approximately 150 established positions that are unfilled. Twenty-one per cent of the veterinary staff employed by the Health of Animals Branch are over 57 years of age, while 70 per cent are over 40 years of age. A projection of anticipated retirement separation up to 1980 indicates a recruitment requirement of 233 during the same period, just to maintain staff numbers without giving consideration to unfilled positions.

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During the past five years 242 veterinarians have been hired and 142 have left the service. The average age of recent employees suggests an unsatisfactory recruitment of younger veterinarians. A similar problem exists in other departments. For example, in the Health Protection Branch 58 per cent of the veterinary staff are over 51 years of age.

Considering the additional problem that modern transportation places on contagious diseases control, we should expect that additional veterinarians will be required in the Contagious Diseases Division of the Health of Animals Branch. Coinciding with this will be increased workloads in the Animal Pathology Division, which will necessitate the employment of more veterinarians. Therefore a solution must be found for the present low recruitment rate if Canada's livestock industry is to maintain its present favourable health position in the world market.

In studying this problem it is the opinion that insufficient use is being made of the veterinarians' professional skills at the working level. This inevitably destroys morale and professional satisfaction. There is little evidence that members of the staff receive much encouragement, or are given adequate opportunity to improve their professional development.

With the present classification each department has special problems. For example, promotion within the Contagious Diseases Division of the Health of Animals Branch is restricted. Eighty per cent of veterinarians are classified within the VS1 and VS2 groups. Any remuneration commensurate with demonstrated ability or long useful service is not recognized as such a classification. This, naturally, discourages incentive. The current position in regard to the relative pay of professional staff and primary products inspectors may reflect more successful bartering on behalf of the larger group of primary products inspectors than the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada was able to achieve for veterinarians.

There is no doubt that this overlapping has caused a serious outcry of dissatisfaction from the professional staff. It is incongruous that many of the jobs classified in the federal service's veterinary positions, which require six years of post-secondary education, are not worth a great

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deal more financially, maybe not even as much, as those occupied by persons with only secondary school training.

A recent survey carried out by the Health of Animals Branch revealed that salaries and professional fulfillment were the two areas of major concern to veterinarians. In order to achieve high levels of productivity it is essential that an environment be created to improve morale and provide a challenge to the professional knowledge and skills of the incumbents, and a scale of rewards related to responsibility and productivity.

I would suggest that serious consideration be given to promoting better career progression of veterinarians within the public service. There should be a wider classification that recognizes the complexity of the work, the kind of assignments, demonstrated ability, as well as seniority and excellence in the job. A system should be adopted in which each classification has a salary floor, but not a maximum. This will permit an outstanding individual in one classification level to receive increments above the floor of the next higher category.

The present pay scale should be reviewed to reflect the extensive training, professional training, responsibilities and skills required for job performance. There is no question that a serious shortage of government veterinarians has threatened to undermine health standards for animals and meat across Canada. So far this shortage has only caused economic difficulties in meat packing and livestock industries. But as the situation continues to deteriorate inspection services may be reduced to the danger level, and the health of the nation's livestock may be jeopardized. Not only that but the vacancies mean that some government responsibilities cannot be met.

This situation is particularly sad because veterinarians in the Health of Animals Branch are now trying to test cattle for brucellosis before they are turned out to pasture, where any infection will spread more rapidly from herd to herd. They are trying to cope with a major outbreak of blue tongue in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. They are trying to maintain inspection services at meat packing plants. They are trying to serve the demands of exporters to test cattle sold to other nations. They are trying to maintain inspection services on all animals and meat imports.

A breakdown in any area could prove disastrous. For example, in the 1950's when the dreaded hoof and mouth disease slipped through the border inspection net in Saskatchewan, Canadian beef farmers lost an estimated \$50 million. Some say the loss amounted to about \$250 million because no nation would accept our animals and meat during the outbreak, and that reduced the value of the nation's entire cattle population. A breakdown in meat packing inspection could threaten the health of consumers and jeopardize export markets. A breakdown in brucellosis, blue tongue, tuberculosis and other disease-testing and control measures could threaten the health of all animals, and again export markets.

We have already lost our market for semen amounting to millions of dollars, thanks to the recent blue tongue outbreaks. As a result of this outbreak of blue tongue in the Okanagan Valley, the federal government is moving veterinarians from across the nation to that area to test cattle as quickly as possible to prevent any further spread.