

THE CONTROL OF BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS.

A Paper read before Section VII. of the International Congress on Tuberculosis, at Washington, D.C., on October 1, 1908.

MR. PRESIDENT,—It would be most unbecoming in me, following the various distinguished speakers who have taken part in the discussions of this Congress, and especially at this late date in the proceedings, to occupy any great length of time in laying before its members the few ideas on the control of Bovine Tuberculosis which I have been able to put together in the limited period at my disposal.

I observe that on the official programme the subject assigned to me is the 'Control of Bovine Tuberculosis in Canada,' the last two words having been added to the title originally sent in by me.

I have but little to say on the control of bovine tuberculosis in Canada, inasmuch as while in some districts, under municipal and provincial laws, efforts are being made to control the disease in dairy herds supplying various centres of population, very little is now being done by the federal government through the Health of Animals Branch of the Department of Agriculture, which is in my charge.

Although for some years, at a period prior to my assuming office, a very considerable amount of testing with tuberculin upon the application of owners was carried on, no appreciable benefit was found to result, and, as a matter of fact, we now confine ourselves to the testing of cattle imported or exported for breeding purposes, those on the Experimental Farms, and a few other herds which have been placed by their owners under the direct control of our officers.

We, however, on the request of owners of cattle who desire them tested, supply tuberculin free of charge to any reputable qualified veterinary surgeon, on condition that he will send to the department the results of the tests made by him, on which we furnish for that purpose.

All cattle reacting to tuberculin in Canada, save those privately tested permanently earmarked by cutting a large T out of the right ear.

I may as well frankly state that the reason for this apparent inertia is that, so far, no satisfactory intelligent method of dealing with bovine tuberculosis has been evolved and we deem it wiser, before taking action, to await the results of the investigations now being conducted by veterinary scientists in various countries, in the hope that some better way of dealing with the problem may be discovered.

Our knowledge of tuberculosis, the tuberculin test, and of their vagaries, has all along been defective and incomplete and undoubtedly is so to-day, and when we bear in mind the many legislative mistakes which, owing to this lack of exact knowledge, have been made in the past, it must be admitted that caution is commendable, and that, before taking any definite departmental action involving the large interests which are at stake in such a country as Canada, it is reasonable that we should 'look before we leap,' and guard, as far as may be, against the possibility of having to recede, more or less ignominiously, from a position once taken.

Many of our medical friends and some veterinarians whose zeal outruns their discretion, advocate compulsory testing and the slaughter of all reacting animals. At first sight, to men lacking practical experience and perhaps devoid of responsibility, this policy may appear a very simple solution of the problem. That it is very far from being so, however, needs but little demonstration to an audience of this nature. All practical veterinary sanitarians, dealing in large matters, are, even without taking into consideration the painful experience of those communities which