

Veterinary Medicine and Veterinarians

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The 'veterinarii' were the animal doctors of ancient Rome, and the word came back into use in the 17th and 18th centuries. Veterinarians are doctors and scientists who care for companion animals(pets), livestock animals, sporting animals , laboratory animals, wild animals and zoological animals etc .The scope of the veterinary profession also encompasses many diverse opportunities beyond the care of sick animals, that is a large part of the work veterinarians perform focuses on prevention of disease rather than the treatment of sick animals .There is also a key role for the members of the profession as guardians of human health in the context of disease transmission from animal or animal products to human.

Historical and current perspective

Once early man had moved from hunting to herding he had an interest in the health and husbandry of his stock. By the time of the ancient civilizations there is evidence of close interaction between man and animals in contexts which are still familiar today the use of animals for production ,draught and war and increasingly as human companions. Many homesteaders had very few belongings when they arrived, and had to slowly build their livestock number. The medicine of this era consisted of things like astringents, bitters, cathartics, antacids, salts, etc. There were many combinations of these medicines. Visualize the tonics of horses, blisters for lameness, salts for intestinal problems, and the like. There were no antibiotics or vaccines as we know them today. Diseases did not spread as fast because there were fewer animals and travel was slow, and people did not move their animals around much. Most livestock owners had their own home remedies, such as salves, hot packs, cold packs, poultices, counter-irritants, and whatever might work. Some farmers seemed better at healing than others, and the neighbors would ask them for advice, or have them do the work. The period of self-taught veterinary medicine and veterinarians came about in this manner.

The veterinary work place has changed in the last century with an increasing emphasis on companion animals kept for pleasure and greater veterinary involvement in production animals ,public health and food hygiene .The role of the profession in protecting the health and welfare of more diverse species groups such as laboratory animals, zoological collections, wild life and indeed the contribution to conservation of endangered species, continues to grow .There is also an increasing body of specialists, both in individual species and in disciplines which cut across species groups ,as opportunities for training and the demand

for specialist services have grown .The comparative approach of veterinary science will continue to provide insight and support for basic scientists and contribute to the understanding of human disease.

Responsibilities of a veterinarian

1. Providing healthcare for companion and livestock animals: Veterinarians diagnose medical problems, prescribe and administer medicines, vaccinate animals against diseases and perform surgery .
2. Protecting humans against diseases(zoonotic) transmitted from animals: Veterinarians help prevent the outbreak and spread of animal diseases, some of which like rabies that can be transmitted to humans.
3. Investigating contagious disease outbreaks among animals and implementing procedures to prevent further spreading .Also taking action to control the disease.
4. Advising the owners or farmers on the care, breeding and management of animals specially the livestock
5. Examination of slaughtering and processing plants, check live animals and carcasses for disease, and enforce government food purity as well as sanitation regulations
6. Providing healthcare for fish(pet and commercial aquaculture),reptiles and birds.
7. Treating the unique healthcare concerns of wildlife and zoo animals
8. Quarantining of exotic animal and animal food.
9. Development and implementation of captive breeding programs to rescue rare and endangered species.
10. Conducting epidemiological or animal pathological investigations to control diseases transmitted through food, animals and to deal with problems of residues from herbicides, pesticides, and antibiotics in animals used for food

Working conditions of veterinarians :

- ❖ Generally has to work long hours
- ❖ To treat animals, one has to work outdoors under less sanitary conditions and in all kinds of weather
- ❖ Risk of been bitten, kicked or scratched by a frightened animal or by an animal in pain.