

Welcome address SA. Veterinary Congress
27 Aug 1977

Dit is vir my 'n groot plesier om vanoggend die geleentheid te hê om u hier te verwelkom. Dit is onnodig om to sê dat ons u beskou as baie belangrike mense in ons samelewing, en dat u werk daaglik van groter belang word, vir die mens se voortbestaan op aarde. Die diens wat u aan die mensdom lewer het ook, in ons tyd, nuwe afmetings aangeneem.

In die verlede was ons geneig om die taak van die veearts te sien as slegs betrokke met die sorg en behandeling van plaasdiere en huisdiere. Die behoud van die getalle en gehalte van ons vee, nieteenstaande 'n geskiedenis van opeenvolgende epidemies, en 'n groot voorkoms van endemiese siektes, is alreeds 'n behaling waarvoor Suid-Afrika groot dank aan u verskuldig is. Hierdie taak gaan natuurlik voort.

Maar die ontwikkeling van nuwe middels, baie waarvan hormone bevat wat deur inspuiting toegedien word, het 'n nuwe en meer direkte diens aan die mensdom meegebring, naamlik sy voortdurende beskerming teen die verspreiding van sulke aktiewe bestanddele in vleis of suiwelprodukte. In sy behandeling van diere, het die veearts dus nou 'n nuwe belangrike rol aangeneem as direkte beveiliging van die mens deur sy toesig oor die hantering van veemiddels.

There are many reasons why I should find it a pleasure, as indeed I do, to welcome you to this Conference in Grahamstown. The staple industry of this City is education, and in order to maintain an output of learning, it is necessary for us to feed and replenish our minds by regular contact with learned men from all fields of scholarship.

Your conference is also of tremendous interest to the region in which Grahamstown is situated. It may sound like a very dismal claim to fame, but the Eastern Cape has more veterinary problems than ^{any} other part of South Africa. The fact that it sustains, nevertheless, a very large stock population, is in itself a tribute to the devoted work of members of your profession.

To Rhodes University, in particular, the field of Veterinary Medicine is of very great interest, and has been from the time of its founding. In fact, the University's desire to be active in this field was a very early obsession that still exists to-day.

From St. Andrews^W's College, where it had begun its life as the "College Department", Rhodes University College moved to its present site in July, 1904, and only six months later the first moves were made, within the University, towards the extension of its work into the fields of Agriculture and Veterinary Science. As shown by Professor J.V.L. Rennie, in a memorandum published in 1964, Rhodes University College was the first university institution to take active steps to set up a Faculty in this field. The fact that it has not been permitted, for more than 70 years, to bring this idea to fruition, can never detract from its pioneering endeavour.

While pursuing its objective through representations at Government level, the University College busied itself with the provision of such courses as it was competent to offer. Of more than passing interest, and another pioneering achievement, was an intensive course offered in 1907, and repeated in 1908, in which 18 lecturers participated, drawn from many parts of the country, and including Dr. Theiler (later Sir Arnold Theiler) and Dr. W. Robertson, who gave 15 lectures on stock diseases.

Shortly after the institution of this course, the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Institute came into being in 1908. In 1911, an Agricultural College was established at Grootfontein, and in 1917 Agricultural Education was raised to University level with the institution of Faculties, simultaneously, at Stellenbosch University and at the Transvaal University College, the latter as a constituent College of the University of South Africa.

Feeling that Agriculture was now adequately provided for, Rhodes University College put aside, for the time being, its aspiration to establish a Faculty of Agriculture, but continued to strive for a Faculty in Veterinary Science. In 1919 the University's Senate actually appointed a Committee to set out the details of the proposed veterinary courses, and a joint meeting of Senate and Council resolved to make final representations to the relevant Government Departments.

But the outstanding success of Onderstepoort, since its establishment in 1908, made it inevitable that the first Veterinary Faculty should be set up in Pretoria, and this happened in 1920.

Once again considering the needs of the country rather than its own aspirations and disappointments, Rhodes University suspended all its activities connected with Veterinary Science, in the knowledge that one faculty could, for the time being, provide for the needs of the entire country. Twice in the early post-war years, Rhodes conducted a study of ^{the} prevailing situation and reaffirmed its intention to set up a faculty, but left all further action in abeyance in the absence of clear proof that a second faculty had become necessary.

In 1962, at the 57th Annual General Meeting of the South African Veterinary Medical Association, a resolution was adopted expressing the view that the training of larger numbers of veterinary surgeons had become desirable, and asking the authorities to consider the necessity of establishing a second faculty. The matter was again discussed at the 58th Annual Meeting while, at the 59th Annual General Meeting, the shortage of practitioners was described as "approaching crisis proportions". That was 13 years ago.

At the same time, in fact since 1961, the university was being urged by agricultural associations and by the South Eastern Areas Development Association, to renew its efforts for the establishment of a Veterinary Faculty at Rhodes. Since then, these associations, and also the University, have made repeated submissions to the Government for the achievement of this object. Until now, for a variety of reasons, consideration of the proposal has been deferred by the Departments concerned, but it is still a live issue of very real importance not only to the Eastern Cape but, we believe, to South Africa, and we eagerly await the moment when the striving of Rhodes for this Faculty, which it has sought for nearly three-quarters of a century, is at last fulfilled.

But in all these years, Rhodes University has never ceased to serve the interests of agriculture to the utmost of its ability. Thwarted in its attempts to set up new Faculties within the university, it has provided

peripheral courses under related Departments in the Faculty of Science, and also courses in Agricultural Economics, while its research work in pasturage and in the eradication of noxious weeds has been of direct value to agriculture. A research institute in Freshwater Studies exists at Rhodes, and a Tick Research Unit has been built up in the past few years to seek alternative ways of combating a pest that is showing increasing resistance to acaricides.

All these efforts, as well as our persistent quest for a Faculty in Veterinary Science, should be seen as manifestations of our faith in the ultimate triumph of logic. No other region in this country has the variety of climatic conditions and types of veld that can be encountered in close proximity to Grahamstown - karoo, coastal grass-land, sour-grass, sweet-grass, fynbos and bushveld. Stock on the farmlands in this area include, in large concentrations, beef and dairy cattle, wool and mutton sheep, angora, and all other varieties of farm animals. All major parasitic diseases, like Heartwater fever, redwater fever, Gall sickness transmitted by a variety of ticks and the development of insecticide resistance in ticks, lung-worms

in cattle and sheep, Liverfluke, Conical Fluke and all roundworms of livestock (except Sandveld Hookworm), are present in the vicinity of Grahamstown. The diagnostic laboratory in this City cannot ever be short of clinical material of a tremendous variety. Our low rainfall and our different rain season, present conditions completely different from those under which Onderstepoort is performing its magnificent work, and offers the opportunity to train some veterinary surgeons under different climatic conditions. Our proximity to Fort Hare, and our historical connection with that institution, will enable us, if it is desired, to provide training also for Black practitioners under conditions closely resembling those under which they will probably be required to practise.

It takes many years to build up a Veterinary Faculty to its full potential, and I think that the Government, in its consideration of our request for such a faculty, should base its decision on the country's projected needs at the end of this century, twenty years from now. Looked at in that light, no time should be lost in giving us the green light to set about the task of preparing to meet the demand for professional services that will undoubtedly exist in the veterinary field in the foreseeable future.

And all that adds up to telling you that Rhodes University has been interested in your work for three-quarters of a century, and would like to be more closely associated with you for centuries to come. To the warm welcome that I extend to you, I add the wish that your conference will be most enjoyable.