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For the past 20 years, the bulk of research support has come from outside sources, primarily from agencies of the federal government.

Now, with great curtailment of federal funds, monies for research are being directed even more toward the solution of major human disease problems such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, environmental pollution, and drug effectiveness. Research on these problems necessarily involves extensive use of experimental animals; hence, the role of research veterinarians remains important and many are involved. However, this relative scarcity of federal funds and their national problem orientation can be expected to free some highly competent research veterinarians in veterinary colleges and animal experiment stations for other research.

This situation can be an opportunity for the U.S. livestock industry to have previously unavailable top quality research talent apply itself to the solution of animal health problems which have long imposed serious handicaps on efficient, economical production. Likewise, by working closely with the livestock industry, veterinary research scientists can identify new opportunities for research support.

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Obtaining Support for Research on Animal Health

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History records that major discoveries are made by well-qualified, dedicated scientists working in adequate facilities and supported for maximum progress. The environment for research in our universities is typically provided by the department, college, and university administration. The funds for support of research, however, have come in relatively small part from state sources. For the past 20 years, the bulk of research support has come from outside sources, primarily from agencies of the federal government.

The securing of outside support has depended chiefly on the ability of principal investigators to successfully compete for support available from the federal agencies. The more promising proposals from veterinary medical disciplines were funded during the 1950's and 1960's. This support for both basic and applied research yielded two decades of meritorious progress on disease problems for which funds were available; however, it caused some areas of need to be neglected as workers shifted their interests to problems with support. The federal funding for human health research has understandably taken priority over that for animals; consequently, few veterinary research workers were able to obtain sufficient support to allow them to devote themselves fully to the solution of animal disease problems which most severely handicap the livestock industry.

Now, with great curtailment of federal funds, monies for research are being directed even more toward the solution of major human disease problems such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, environmental pollution, and drug effectiveness. Research on these problems necessarily involves extensive use of experimental animals; hence, the role of research veterinarians remains important and many are involved. However, this relative scarcity of federal funds and their national problem orientation can be expected to free some highly competent research veterinarians in veterinary colleges and animal experiment stations for other research.

This situation can be an opportunity for the U.S. livestock industry to have previously unavailable top quality research talent apply itself to the solution of animal health problems which have long imposed serious handicaps on efficient, economical production. Likewise, by working closely with the livestock industry, veterinary research scientists can identify new opportunities for research support.

But how does the research worker persuade the livestock industry to respond to the opportunity?

Here are some suggested means to this end:

1) Prepare priority listings of livestock diseases in a particular region based upon livestock disease losses in the region, by species, and which confront the producers. This will help focus attention on diseases that most seriously handicap production.

2) Prepare a statistical statement to point out the present cost of living with these major disease burdens, thus emphasizing the urgency of research toward their control and eradication.

3) Rationalize the misconception held by some livestock groups that, if they wait long enough, the government will eventually rescue them from their animal health problems. It needs to be understood that with state and federal funds for research now so very limited, and dollar losses from disease increasing, a point must soon be reached wherein the industry will find it essential to make financial investments in research to help eliminate their livestock losses.

4) Reiterate that if the limited state and federal money for research is to be directed toward health problems of greatest handicap to the livestock industry, industry itself must help establish the research priorities. One of the most effective ways of expressing concern for a problem is to provide "priming" funds to cooperating veterinary research workers for a pilot project. Successful pilot studies which show promise and concrete evidence of industry involvement are far more likely to enlist federal and state support than are mere expressions of need by either the industry or research workers.

5) Inform other veterinary scientists who may seek support from the livestock industry that there will be available from the AVMA Council on Research the following documents to fortify his own efforts toward justifying his research proposals to solve certain livestock problems. These documents will include:

a) A statement of justification for research on each species of animal as demonstrated by the cost of trying to live with current disease handicaps.

b) A listing of the major health problems which

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jeopardize profitable production of each animal species.

c) A listing of past research accomplishments for each livestock species pointing out achievements which have made our livestock industry possible.

The research scientist will be further assisted by using lists of currently active veterinary medical research projects available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Smithsonian Science Information Exchange. These lists will enable him promptly to focus his talent on the most neglected facets of need.

6) Work with the livestock industry and livestock breed organizations. As farmers and ranchers better understand the interests and ability of the research worker in practical problem solving, he will acquire new confidence in research. Livestock industry influence on state and commercial funding agencies can emphasize the health problems most vital to the industry.

7) Finally, take the initiative in demonstrating that there are so many ways for livestock producers and research veterinarians to work together to their mutual advantage toward the solution of animal health problems that neither can afford to neglect the opportunities.

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