

Welcome to Georgia

Dave Anderson, D.V.M.
*Dean, School of Veterinary Medicine
University of Georgia
Athens, Ga. 30602*

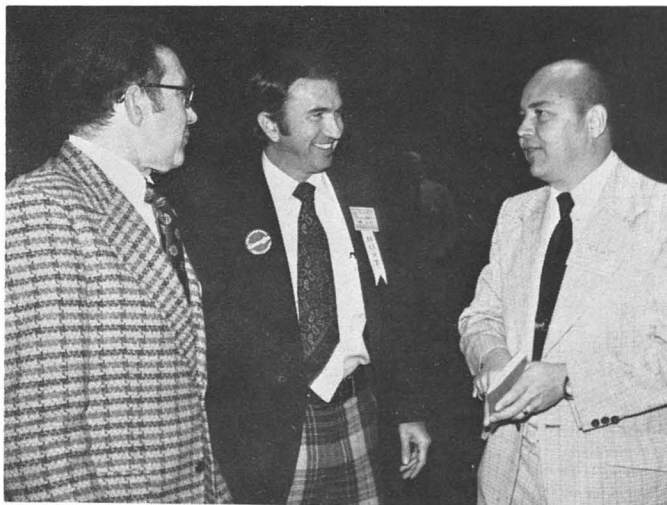
Welcome to Georgia. First of all I would like to show some slides of our college. The learning resources center is used in histology, pathology, and a variety of other courses. There are now eight courses, either partially or wholly taught on the autotutorial system. The building is open from about six in the morning until 12 midnight and gets very heavy use. There are videotape systems which are handy when a student knows he has a certain surgical procedure coming up. He can pull out the tape and at his leisure review this procedure. The library reading room serves both the students and the faculty and the staff of the college. We do have the rudiments of a research farm. Again, this is an area where some research animals are kept separate from the college because of particular disease agents, or sometimes it is used as a holding area for teaching animals. As Dr. Clarkson mentioned, we do have a keen interest in the Animal Health Research Act and the one part of it that could provide some facilities, because we do not have good large animal isolation facilities. We do a lot of things with large animals but we have a pretty tough time working with any highly infectious disease because we just don't have the space or the facilities for it.

I must mention that we hear so much about the need for more food animal practitioners. We hear it from some of the livestock producers in our state and around the Southeast. They ask why we don't put out more large animal practitioners. Of course, our response is that we put out a veterinarian. He may go into large animal practice, small animal practice, or a variety of areas but we have no way of forcing him into any certain aspect of the profession. Neither do we have any way of forcing them into any certain geographic area. But what we can do, I believe, to stimulate students to go into food animal medicine, if there is indeed a shortage or not just a maldistribution in that area, is try to provide them the best education in large animal or food animal medicine that we can while they are going through school, so that they are familiar with it, feel comfortable with it, and they will be willing to go into that type of practice. We are a little bit limited in the Athens area as are a number of the other veterinary colleges, in the livestock population immediately surrounding Athens. We have a pretty good representation of most livestock species, but we are a little short on some. We have a tremendous facility at Tifton where we have a diagnostic laboratory which we will talk about later, but our proposal has been that we should put a satellite clinic in the Tifton area. Again this is not a

clinic like we would have at the hospital at the school where we'd be in competition with the practitioners. What we are envisioning is a herd health referral type practice where the local practitioners would call our group in to go to the farms on herd health programs or we would work through the diagnostic lab when they have identified a certain problem in the area to have this group go out. What we envision is putting probably two clinicians in the Tifton area and then with this block system of rotation with the senior students, they would be spending either all, or part, of a food animal block in the Tifton area. This is the most dense livestock population in the state of Georgia. I think this would help get the students out and get them familiar with that part of Georgia that has the livestock population and it would also get them more experienced in large animal medicine than they get simply in the clinics as they see the cases coming through.

The value of the livestock industry in Georgia is about \$1.3 billion, and, as in most every other place, we estimate at least a 10% loss, which translates down to about \$25-26 per person in the state of Georgia per year. This is a significant loss and I think this is the basis for our emphasis on more production of more food animal veterinarians and for establishing more research in the area of food animal disease problems. This is also the basis for our operation of the two diagnostic labs, one in Tifton and one in Athens.

The Tifton diagnostic lab is about 200 miles south of Athens, a new facility within the last few years. It has the usual organizational structure—microbiology,



pathology, etc.—that you would find in most any diagnostic laboratory. I believe they are very fine facilities. It has just been accredited for doing FA testing work, and again their mode of action is to serve the practitioners of the state. This diagnostic lab takes cases only on referral from a veterinarian. The livestock producer cannot just bring an animal into the lab. He has to go through his local practitioner before he can bring animals to the diagnostic laboratory. They then work in the lab, on the farm, in the usual manner.

The diagnostic lab in Athens is new and is not quite so fortunate. It is in a double-deck trailer (at least part of it is) in the courtyard. Of course we hope this situation will change soon.

This just gives you a little idea of the success of the diagnostic lab in Athens in the last three years. The growth of items is about 5000 and will be well over 6000, nearly 7000 this year so there was a significant justification for two diagnostic labs in the state of Georgia. It is simply too far to bring something from the north Georgia mountains way down to Tifton. It had to be someplace near this part of the livestock population.

Another aspect of the college is continuing education for veterinarians. Each year we have between 12 and 20 programs put on either at Athens or scattered at some other locations in the state. Of course, communicating with veterinarians is an important factor and often a problem. We do have tremendous turn-outs for our continuing education programs.

We also have an animal technicians' program in conjunction with Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. This is a two-year college in the Tifton area, and this is a two-year animal technician program. Our involvement is that the students in this program spend six months out of their 18 months in the program in the clinic in our veterinary school at Athens. So each year half of the animal technician class is with us from July to December, the other half from January to June. So far, it has worked out very well. We had the usual amount of misgivings as to how the animal technician students were going to work in with the faculty, the professional students, and with our own technicians. So far it has worked out very well with very little problem. I think we are giving tremendous training to these animal technicians. This again should allow us to extend veterinary medicine and food animal medicine throughout the state by producing technicians that would be very helpful in working with the practitioner. The animal technicians program is going to remodel the old diagnostic lab in the Tifton area for their main training center.

We also have a big poultry disease research center at the university and the college and I think this is quite logical because Georgia is number one in overall poultry production. We're neither number one in broilers, nor number one in eggs, but combined, we are. We have a tremendous poultry industry and they are very supportive of disease problems. They not

only work through the legislature, which puts money in the college for poultry diseases, but they actually contribute their own money from the Poultry Federation and from their improvement plan.

We have an active fish disease research program. This is rather a strange one. We got into this because of the catfish and the trout industries, as far as commercial fish and food production, but the biggest use of this diagnostic capability, and actually the research service, has been from the pet fish industry. It is a tremendous multi-million dollar industry and we have a real industry in it because they have a real variety of problems when they are bringing in fish and turtles, and what have you, from all over the world. Most of them have one or another sort of infectious agent and we need to have testing procedures and insurance that we're not going to bring something in that will get into our livestock population.

We also do consulting work for the practitioners in the state and southeastern region on radiographic interpretation.

Admission to a veterinary college is now a serious problem. It has been mentioned that it is now harder, and I think it is in all the states, to get into the veterinary school than it is to get into medical school. We are having approximately six or seven qualified applicants for each position that we can take in our college and the same is true in the other schools. We run probably 2-3000 applicants and we screen the majority of them out. It is very difficult to set up criteria to pick the 86 students we take and still stay out of the federal or state courts from those who do not get in.

What's happened to the grade point average? We are not taking a bunch of eggheads, quite the opposite. If we tried to pick our classes, as we're sometimes accused of, simply on academic qualifications, we could fill the class with those that have a 3.8 or above grade point average out of a 4.0. That is not what we do. We're between a 3.3 and 3.5 grade point average. We look at a variety of other benchmarks other than grades. We use Graduate Record Examinations; we use letters of recommendation, their animal experience, their background, etc. This is what makes it difficult when somebody's nephew or cousin, or son or daughter, does not get into veterinary school and yet they had a 3.8 grade point average. We have a pretty tough time of it. But if we just went on grades, we could have a secretary pick the class with a pocket calculator in about a half hour some morning. We actually wind up interviewing nearly 300 students, picking the 86 we take. In the class a year ago, half already had a bachelor's degree before they got into school, and a number of them had a master's degree. This is something that bothers me tremendously; the amount of time we spend in educating the veterinary student. Most of the students here you can see already have a bachelor's degree. That's four years. Some of them have more than that, but we're averaging four years of school before they get into veterinary school. So its

taking eight years to produce a veterinarian. The Europeans are doing it much more efficiently by taking their students right out of high school into a six-year program. The first two years of the program everybody is in the same thing but that's where they weed them out. If they are going to take 150 students per class into their four-year professional school, they weed from taking everybody that wanted to apply that first two years, shrinking them down to the size they can take into the professional class, and they are producing veterinarians in six years. We're taking at least eight years. Somebody is paying for it—the taxpayers. And, we're all taxpayers. There has to be a better way.

The Terry report for veterinarians is predicting a tremendous shortage nationwide and in the SREB (Southern Regional Education Board area-13 southern states). It shows by their predictions that we're going to have at least a shortage of 2000 veterinarians. A pamphlet lately from the AVMA shows the distribution of the veterinary schools around the country. Florida and Tennessee will be taking students next fall, so that adds two more to it, and very soon Mississippi State and maybe North Carolina, Virginia and several others. I think it begins to become a worry to all of us. Are we just sure where we're going and whether we're going to be producing too many veterinarians? What concerns us here in the Southeast is that it looks like almost all of the southeastern states, the majority of them, will be producing veterinarians, which is going to put us in the situation of training veterinarians and exporting them across the country to other areas, particularly up to the New England area. I don't know that that's bad except that it is tremendously expensive to

educate a veterinarian and it seems peculiar that just certain areas are bearing most of this expense. The Midwest has borne the brunt of this for a number of years—the Big 10 area. Now it seems that the Southeast is going to jump into it and it seems to me there needs to be some real serious thought as to where these schools go. I don't try to discourage any of them. I'm glad to see them. It will take some of the pressure off us but I think as professionals we need to do some real soul searching as to whether part of what we have is simply a shortage of veterinarians, or simply a maldistribution of veterinarians in some areas. Over a period of years, we are still going to have a net shortage of veterinarians in our current educational process.

Now, a little about the financial picture of our particular College of Veterinary Medicine. We're about average. There are some a lot bigger than we are and some a lot smaller. We have about a \$5 million operating budget: half comes from the state and the other half of it is money generated by our faculty. I think this indicates we have an eager, aggressive faculty that is able to attract money for research programs.

One of our big hopes of the future is our new hospital. It is actually out for bids and the bid opening is the 16th of December. We obviously all have our fingers crossed. This is a 7.1 million dollar building. We are hoping, obviously, that the bids come in within the dollars that we have. This will offer a tremendous advantage in Georgia. We won't be the biggest by any means, but we will have as good a physical facilities as anybody else. This has been one thing that has hurt us. It may allow us the opportunity to expand our class size if we can expand our faculty size at the same time.