

placentas. X-ray—they can position the animals; they can take the radiographs; they can develop them for you. What about pregnancy examinations? Is it all right? We do have some who report that they do blood work. These are usually people who have come from hospitals who are trained as lab technicians, and then we came along and helped train them in our part of it. One other thing we might look into is how to use animal technicians in inventory control in your hospital, business practices, keeping records, etc. What is being done to train them in our area? We have the Texas State Technical Institute. We were of the opinion that by this year, they would be approved. I don't believe we are going to have it come off. This is a two-year school, located at Waco, Texas. The University has a biomedical science program that is a four-year study. This is where a lot of them will come from. Dr. Sippel at the state diagnostic lab at A&M uses a lot of these youngsters when they graduate. The problem is that it is a new program. They have only had a few graduates. It will be about two years before we really start turning them out. The State Association works with these programs. We have three different committees—the education committee, the advisory committee to the animal tech school, and then an employee improvement committee. This employee improvement committee is to help upgrade the ones we are using today. Our State Association has approved the State Tech school at Waco, and we hope to try to get another one started in the western part of the state. Then we will be looking more at the feedlot-type cowboy. Some of our veterinarians have said that they cover wide areas and a technician must do the work. It is an understanding that the owner knows that this is a non-licensed person, and he is just doing this as first aid. We had one man say he covered ten thousand square miles and he was gone 50% of the time. If some things came and the technician didn't take care of them, they would be dead before he got back. Some feel that this is unethical, that they do unethical things. If an animal is brought to a veterinarian for treatment, the veterinarian should do the treatment. As far as licensing them or recognizing them, our State Board asked the attorney general of the state of Texas about it, and the attorney general said that the law does not say that they can control anything but a licensed veterinarian. They can not give any recognition to anyone less than a licensed veterinarian. We've got other problems right now. Arkansas has been registering their animal technicians over the past few years. They are going to introduce a bill in January or February to their state legislature including a new Practice Act that will include animal technicians, and their Practice Act is after the AVMA model Practice Act. I couldn't find anything from Louisiana. I tried to call one and I guess his animal technician—a good Cajun named Pierre—was there! I was leaving a call-back number to operator 46 and he said, "All right, I've got it, operator 46, College Station, Texas." She said, "The calling number is Capital 6-84—." He

said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." The operator said, "What's the matter? Didn't you get it?" He said, "I don't know how to make a capital six!"

District IX

Dr. Larry E. Rice
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I had 59 replies. Sixty-eight percent of these do use an animal technician in their cattle practice. Of the ones who do not use them, only 22% plan to use them in the future. The reasons for not using them were that their practice didn't warrant it; one reason was quackery; another said he wasn't going to use them, but he preferred to train his own technicians. Of those who did answer "yes"—there were 40 of them—58% of these were trained by the veterinarian. They have used them from two months to 20 years. All but two of them who used technicians used them also in their small animal and equine practices. Some of the uses that I thought to be interesting were 82% use them for administering medication. Nearly half of them use them for dehorning. Fifty percent use them for drawing blood samples, and 25% are used for drawing brucellosis samples. Over 50% of them were used for vaccinations. Three of the positive replies used them for brucellosis vaccination. No one used them for pregnancy palpation, and two for artificial insemination, and none of them for uterine infusions. Four of them were used for surgeries and suturing wounds which was a very small amount. However, 70% of them used them for assisting in major abdominal surgery. Fifty percent used them for administering anesthetics, 70% for OB assistance. All of these things tell me that the people in District IX are using their technicians for a number of technical things. Over 50% of them were trained by the practitioner and did not receive formal training. For example, over 50% used them for blood chemistry, hematology and urology. Fifty-eight percent used them for X-ray even though they were trained within the clinic. They did not do the procedures talked about over 50% of the time without the veterinarian present. Twenty-five percent used them 50% of the time without the veterinarian present. Slightly over 25% used them 25% of the time, nearly half used them 10% of the time. The remainder made no answer. I had 12 replies that said they did use them for emergency treatments, and 14 that said they did not use them. That meant that there were quite a number who didn't answer that question. Salary range—\$250-\$750 a month.

I will read three comments here that I thought were interesting: "At one time we employed technicians from the Curtiss School. We were reported as misusing them and were severely criticized as a result of this. No more formally educated technicians for us." They are going to continue using technicians, but

very specifically say no formal education. This particular technician was used for very many of the procedures. I don't think they are scared of the technician; they are scared about what their colleagues are saying about their using them. "I prefer to train my own lay help. I think you're going out of bounds when you let a technician do such things as pregnancy checking, suturing wounds, etc. Let's keep the profession more professional instead of making a lot of quacks. Would you let a medical technician handle wounds or examine you or your family? I certainly would not." On the other hand most of the comments were quite favorable to the technician. I had the idea that they were most favorable, and they want better training for their bovine practice. Also, they want to use them more under veterinary supervision. They feel that this is the best chance for them to get to use them in their practice. They don't mean surgery. But they want the man to be legally free to go out with his instruction, not his supervision, and do some of these treatments. One more comment here: "The animal technician has been a great help to me. I have been lucky enough to have obtained good ones. I believe that for a mixed practice, they need to have a large animal background to be of help." One thing I would like to say is that the first regulation on the technician is the veterinarian that hires him. If this man regulates his duties to where he can handle them and keep the technician supervised, they will be an asset to the profession and to the animal industry. If the technician gets out of hand and is allowed to do as much as some of them think they are capable of doing, they become a deterrent to all. As far as regulations of the State Association and Examining Board are concerned, I was not able to contact all of them, but of the ones I did contact they are considering registration or the problems, at least, they have faced as far as changing their Practice Act if it is necessary. Many of them feel that their Practice Act is adequate, and at the present time, one of them, Wyoming, is examining veterinary technicians, and they must pass this examination. They have not yet said that it is a license, registration or what. They have taken a separate examination.

District X

Dr. Robert E. Dickerson
Tulare, California

Need for Animal Technicians—Fact or Fiction

The first question I have asked myself is, "Where is the push for animal technicians coming from and is there a justification?" This question would probably be like the parable of the blind pygmies and the elephant. Depending on what area was being touched is what your impression of the whole would look like.

I can see that it might be coming from special in-

terest groups. Here we might find the feedlot operator, the dairyman, the humane societies, and perhaps even the pet owners. All with a possible different ax to grind.

The feedlot operator or dairyman says there is a shortage of large animal veterinarians. Is this numerically true or is it a matter of the industry not knowing how to properly utilize a veterinarian? Perhaps the veterinarian hasn't geared himself for the demands of the industry. If there truly is a numerical shortage—is it because our veterinary colleges fail to encourage the food animal oriented student? - Or perhaps, our state examining boards tend to be restrictive?

I've been told that in California the biggest lobbying group for animal technicians has been our humane societies. Next, I suspect, are parents, through congressmen, of children rejected from veterinary schools. They also have been pushing for low cost spay clinics. I suspect the two have a lot in common as far as objectives. I again ask, "Where does the push come from?" Is it the general public saying that our professional fees are out of line or just poor communication between our profession and the humane societies? Also I might add that every college that can throw a program together is attempting to do so. I think they are more interested in the X number of dollars of state aid that it will bring into their school, rather than finding an equitable solution to the problem.

The pet owner, whether it be small animal or equine, probably does not directly contribute much to the push except that they are ready to take advantage of any program that provides reduced cost or free services such as rabies, VEE or spay clinics.

On the other side of the coin—we have our profession. I can see where any type of practice whether group or solo, mixed or specialized might use technicians to relieve doctors of non-professional duties. The question I have here is of motivation. Is the technician being used just to elevate the doctor's income by using lay help and charging professional fees, thus negating the need of hiring an associate? Each practice can only be the judge of this.

Speaking for our practice, we do not have a need for them . . . What we need are more and better educated herdsmen with backgrounds in nutrition, breeding and record systems. We do train milkers or herdsmen to treat milk fevers, RP'S and follow-up therapy where we have routine means of monitoring end results.

A recent survey of our local association showed that none of the large animal practices represented utilized an animal technician.

Now, what is being done at our state level in District X? As I mentioned before, we probably have a dozen colleges offering some type of course of which none are AVMA approved. The legislature has as of this September passed a bill regulating animal technicians. We've had a very active CVMA committee which has helped formulate and guide its