

Profile of a Practicing Veterinarian

Dr. Ian Baker, Aylesbury, Bucks, England

During a recent visit to his homeland, the Editor had the distinct pleasure of visiting one of the most outstanding veterinary practices in the United Kingdom. He was the guest of Dr. Ian D. Baker, Aylesbury, Bucks, England.

James Herriot emerged from the highly industrial city of Glasgow, Scotland and journeyed to Thirsk, Yorkshire to join a large animal practice in the late 1930s. The rest is now history and our honorable colleague is a legend. Likewise, Dr. Baker was a "city boy" born and raised in London under the "wings" of the hallowed public (private) School of Harrow — undoubtedly one of the most prestigious institutions in the world.

Dr. Baker spent a month on a farm before applying to two veterinary colleges. He was admitted to the Bristol University Veterinary College and graduated in 1965. He joined the practice in Aylesbury and stayed until 1965 when he left for Kingsbridge, Devon but returned to Aylesbury nine months later.

There has been a veterinary practice at 49 Cambridge St., Aylesbury for over 100 years! At that time it dealt mainly with horses. In 1936 Dr. Guy Anderson, a Canadian, took over. He was a very well known veterinary surgeon (as veterinarians are called in the United Kingdom). He retired in 1970. In 1976 the practice merged with a local horse practice and two satellite clinics have been established in recent years.

Today, the practice has seventeen veterinarians (with 7 partners). Five deal with farm animals, six with horses, and six with small animals. The Veteri-

nary Hospital was the first to be licensed by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1967. Ninety percent of the practice is within a 15 mile radius. There are 80 dairies, with 100 herd average, 90% British Friesian, mainly commercial. There are many family owned and operated dairies. However, the recent milk quota system has had a major impact on the dairy industry. Due to this imposition, many dairy farmers focused on producing more from grass and less from concentrated feed. Also, a drive along the country lanes in Britain today shows the significant increase in the number of sheep, everywhere!

Dr. Baker spends most of his time on herd health programs. From mid October until mid May his schedule is almost complete with scheduled visits, every two weeks (some weekly) on these programs. His fees are £40/hr (approximately \$65/hr). Dr. Baker relates that one of the beneficial side effects of the milk quota system is that older and less productive cows have been culled, resulting in a national cell count drop from 480-500,000/cmn to an average of 320,000/cmn. Food animal practice accounts for about 30% of the gross income. Sales of drugs to farmers are high. Dr. Baker has some interesting ideas on the advent of bovine somatotropin hormone (BSH) (see below).

Dr. Baker is a past president of the British Cattle



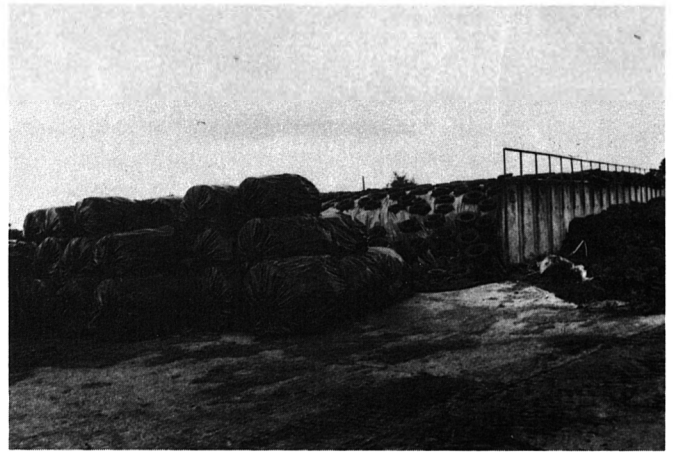
Dr. Baker and his daughter Hannah, at the entrance of the Veterinary Surgery.



The Baker residence with the traditional thatch roof.



The milk quota system has resulted in a marked increase in the sheep population across the United Kingdom. This increase and the greater use of silage has resulted in the more common occurrence of listeriosis.



A typical silage pit (in the background) with the more recently adopted use of plastic covers. Problems occur with birds pecking and vermin. Botulism has been reported increasingly.



A roadside milkstand — a very rare sight nowadays.

Veterinary Association (1976-77) which was established in 1968. It has over 950 members with meetings three times a year including the annual meeting in April and one in conjunction with the British Veterinary Congress. Dr. Baker has been treasurer of the BCVA since 1979 and attended the AABP Convention in Oklahoma City in 1982. He is an examiner for the University of Bristol degree of B.V.Sc.

Dr. Baker and his wife, Lynn, a physiotherapist, have two children; Toby 17 and Hannah 14.

Dr. Baker states, "I am not worried about the future of bovine practice. We will probably end up with a smaller number of practices which will specialize in food animal medicine."

Bovine Somatotropin

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Never before has there been so much controversy about a new drug as there is about Bovine Somatotropin (B.S.T.) This is even more unusual since the drug is only in the early period of its trials and is probably some four years away from being licensed for general use. Much of this controversy and concern is due to a lack of knowledge about the product and in this article I will try and allay some of these fears.

The technical B.S.T. is a polypeptide made up of 199 amino acids in a chain. It is manufactured by a clever piece of genetic engineering and it is identical in every way to the Somatotropin or Growth Hormone produced by the cow's

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pituitary gland.

In growing animals Somatotropin promotes growth in soft tissue and bone whilst in lactating cows it plays an important role in the regulation of milk production. An increase in B.S.T. levels causes a major redirection of the nutrient supply to support milk production. A natural high yielding cow is probably one with a high level of its own B.S.T.

Although B.S.T. is a hormone, it is in no way comparable with the steroid "sex" hormones used as growth promoters. It is perhaps worth remembering that there is nothing sinister about a hormone — they are chemical messengers. All of us have many, many hormones circulating in our bodies all the time and our own body functions would not occur without them.