

Arthur Farquhar Webster AM PhC BVSc DVSc FACVSc 1906-1997

Arthur Webster was born in Sydney, Australia, the son of CF Webster, who was both a pharmacist and a dentist. Arthur graduated as a pharmacist in 1926, but during his course he developed an interest in bacteriology and the commercial production of vaccines. To become licensed to make vaccines, he enrolled at University of Sydney where he graduated BVSc in 1935. He established his own company to manufacture veterinary vaccines in 1936 and became one of the few in the world to develop equipment and techniques for the emerging technology of large-scale production of vaccines.

In the 1930s, Webster was the first in the world to manufacture fowl pox vaccines using mild, attenuated strains of the virus, and, later, the first in Australia to manufacture vaccines for the control of infectious laryngotracheitis, infectious bronchitis, and Marek's disease in poultry. Following publication of the work on clostridial diseases of sheep by AW Turner and HW Bennetts, Webster applied his knowledge of large-scale bacterial techniques to manufacture clostridial vaccines by deep culture fermentation. Such innovation was characteristic of the man. In the early 1960s, he began production of a canine distemper vaccine using an Onderstepoort strain of the virus. In the following years, he developed vaccines for the control of canine virus hepatitis, canine parainfluenza, feline panleukopenia and feline respiratory diseases. Within 18 months of the worldwide outbreak of canine parvovirus disease, his company, now Cyanamid Websters, was one of the first in the world to develop a vaccine against this devastating disease.

Webster's son graduated in veterinary science at the University of Sydney, joined the company as Technical Director in 1970 and succeeded his father as Managing Director when he retired in 1980. Retirement gave him the freedom to devote himself to research and development in the Company, which gave him great personal satisfaction for the next decade.

In 1956, Webster was elected president of the Australian Veterinary Association, which honoured him with the award of the Gilruth Prize in 1987. The University of Sydney awarded him the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Science in 1990.

References

Obituary. *Aust Vet J* 1997;75:613.

Webster AC. *Aust Vet Hist Rec* 2000;no 29:1-14.

K Baker
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