

Veterinary practice in the 1940s

The year 1941 was a significant year for Sydney veterinary graduates as it marked the first graduates of the new five-year course at the Sydney Veterinary School. In addition, Dr HB Parry, lecturer in Veterinary Medicine, introduced a new approach to the teaching of clinical medicine - previously unchanged for many years. This stimulated an interest in clinical studies in the new graduates, many of whom were either bonded to the Department of Agricultural positions or to research, or went to other purely disease control jobs.

At this time, the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture introduced an Animal Health Service, which was in addition to the disease control activities previously provided by that State. Dr T Philip, the Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Agriculture in Tasmania, came to Sydney to interview and recruit new graduates to fill these positions. As a consequence, three new graduates from the 1941 year, namely Drs HO Cartwright, FR Coughlin and WH Southcott, were appointed and spent the next five years in various parts of Tasmania doing clinical practice and thus gaining valuable experience.

1946 saw the end of WW11 and its restrictions on the movement of veterinarians. An interest in rural practice followed with the commencement of a subsidised scheme in the Hunter Valley, based on Hexham. This was the first of such schemes in NSW. Meanwhile at Kiama, five dairy factories - Dapto, Albion Park, Jamberoo, Gerringong and Berry - decided to advertise for a salaried veterinarian to develop a veterinary service for their suppliers. This scheme was broadly based on the Tasmanian model. HO Cartwright was appointed and became the first graduate to practise in a wholly rural dairying area outside Wollongong. There were no veterinarians in practice in south east NSW. The area covered by the factories scheme measured approximately 10 km by 48 km (480 sq km) and consisted of a coastal area east of the Illawarra escarpment. HO Cartwright pioneered this service solo for two years travelling 48,000 km per year and treating 220 cases of bovine dystocia and 153 cases of milk fever as well as all of the other work.

In 1948, the workload became too much for one man and KD Baker was appointed as second veterinarian. However, both veterinarians worked extremely long hours, seven days a week and both resigned in 1949. HO Cartwright went on to pioneer veterinary practice in the Clarence Valley, NSW, servicing 1200 dairy farms alone in this district. KD Baker went into private practice in Bondi as a small animal clinician.

HO Cartwright
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