

PLANS FOR A VETERINARY COLLEGE  
AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

by Dr. George T. Edds, Chairman, Veterinary Science Department

The IFAS Veterinary Science Department presently serves Florida by providing research on a number of economically important farm animal diseases that cause an estimated \$52 million in losses annually. Research training in the areas of microbiology, parasitology, pathology, physiology, pharmacology, and toxicology has been offered to graduate students since 1964. Similarly, undergraduate courses are provided for students majoring in the animal, dairy, poultry, and laboratory animal sciences. An Extension and continuing education program has, to the extent possible, served to acquaint producer groups and the veterinary profession with new knowledge on animal diseases and their control.

In 1964 when the DARE (Developing Agricultural Resources Effectively) program was initiated, the Veterinary Science faculty and Florida's veterinary profession were asked to advise the University what steps should be taken to help assure an adequate and wholesome supply of meat, milk and eggs for the state on a competitive basis with that produced elsewhere. In 1965, Florida's Legislature evaluated the shortage of veterinarians, the limited opportunities for qualified students to study veterinary medicine, and the expanding need for veterinarians for animal and poultry production, as well as in public health and companion animal programs. Based on the conclusions of this study, the legislature authorized the establishment of a College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Florida. The 1969 Legislature provided the initial funds to plan for the College, hire a dean, and to develop the curriculum, faculty, facilities, and space needs.

Without an increase in the number of practicing veterinarians in the state, the ratio of Florida veterinarians to animals and people will progressively decline. Other states with veterinary colleges are expanding their entering enrollment to supply their own needs. And until recently, some of these states have actively sought students from the adjoining states. These states now find their own students' demands cannot be met and are withdrawing from regional educational contracts. Furthermore, due to the very low regional student support provided under these contracts, veterinary colleges accepting such students find increasing financial deficits which are difficult for them to justify to their own legislatures. Recognizing the need for more veterinarians and educational facilities, the Federal government is now providing up to two-thirds of the construction costs and as much as one-half the operational funds for new veterinary colleges in other states. Similar support is being requested by the University of Florida for development of its College.

Finally—and this is most important—an increasing number of interested and well-qualified Florida students cannot major in veterinary medicine because of insufficient veterinary educational facilities here and elsewhere. Therefore, to provide adequate educational opportunities for Florida students desiring to complete a degree in veterinary medicine to assist in correcting Florida's present and projected deficit of more than 500 veterinarians to expand our research on those disease problems causing losses of 20 percent of the livestock and poultry potential, and to develop a strong continuing education program for approximately 500 veterinarians now in the state, further planning funds are needed. If construction funds are made available by 1972, this will enable us to enroll an entering class of 64 Florida students by 1974.