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Chart I: Organization of Veterinary Services in Mexico.

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A. General

Veterinary participation in public health activities and animal disease control in Mexico is disorganized and ineffective. Sporadic attempts to establish veterinary health projects are generally politically motivated measures terminating abortively as a result of improper planning, lack of financial support and the laissez-faire attitude of those concerned in applying measures, as well as those to which such measures pertain.

The establishment of accessible regional diagnostic facilities or the effective use of those existing has not been accomplished.

An apparently impregnable barrier of isolation, distrust and suspicion, separates officials of the medical and veterinary professions, and efforts to breach or bridge this condition by international organization technicians and a few far-sighted Mexican members of these professions have, as yet, been unsuccessful.

In a few larger municipal areas of cultural and tourist development, demands for quality and purity of livestock products have led to the establishment of inspection and standards, but control is variable and rarely acceptable according to North American criteria.

Government control of veterinary activities is poorly coordinated and rarely financially supported. The vast machinery for control of foot-and-mouth disease, supported and indirectly supervised through a Joint U.S./Mexican Commission, is an exception to this situation.

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Technical assistance programs, other than that of the Joint U.S./Mexican Foot-and-Mouth Disease Commission, have generally met with frustrating lack of cooperation on the part of Mexican authorities.

The culminating effect of Mexico's lack of veterinary planning and inefficient supervision is a persistent shortage of animal products for national requirements and a failure to take full advantage of an economically favorable export

1/ 6/ 9/ 10/ 13/ 19/
market.

B. Environmental factors affecting health

1. Topography and climate -- Mexico's agricultural area is largely well-suited to livestock development. Even the semi-arid range land is seasonally useful and the lush tropical regions are ideal for adaptable livestock when parasites are well controlled. 1/ 10/

2. Socio-economic pattern -- Mexico has developed a cultural and scientific background and an economic stability necessary to implement veterinary public health and animal disease control measures, but has not yet applied the required procedures and effort to alleviate its deplorable and dangerous health hazards.

Illiteracy, near poverty and frequent association with and exposure to such diseases as tuberculosis, brucellosis, and rabies, cause high incidence rates among the Indian population.

In rural areas certain zoonoses infection rates are extremely high but neither the local population nor national health authorities are particularly concerned, and the progress to date is limited principally to investigative studies

by international agencies such as the Pan American Health Organization. 1/ 3/ 6/ 8/ 11/ 13/

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h. Nutrition

b. Food supply and distribution -- The dual markets - local and North

American - periodically disrupt the normal flow of meat to the major metropolitan areas. When North American or other export prices for beef are high a short supply occurs in the Mexico City Area and other large city markets. Furthermore, prices rise with serious consequence to the lower income consumers. To alleviate these periodic shortages and to avoid political repercussions, the Federal government resorts to restriction of export quotas as the need occurs. The low level of animal productivity makes importation of milk products and specialty meat items a constant necessity. Considerable emphasis is placed on importation of various classes of breeding animals, and development and conservation of forage as means of increasing productivity. 1/ 9/ 10/ 13/ 19/

c. Food sanitation, storage, technology -- Food sanitation standards have

been established at production and distribution sites in Mexico City and a few other metropolitan areas, but operation and control is frequently ineffective. Meat inspection in slaughterhouses is cursory at best, and milk standards vary from relatively high for premium product to none. Enforcement is arbitrary and may often be politically motivated. Very little effort is made to eliminate the reservoirs of infections or the sources of product contamination. 1/ 6/ 10/ 13/

G. Diseases

2. Diseases of animals

Despite a formal veterinary profession historically older than that of any of the countries of the Americas, Mexico has never managed to establish effective livestock health programs comparable to those of several countries in the hemisphere.

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Consequently animal diseases continue to plague livestock and effect the health of the human population in this potentially rich producing area.

(1) Piroplasmiasis - Tick fever is the most economically important current livestock disease in Mexico, not only because of the national loss through mortality and morbidity, but also because of the tremendous cost in control of ticks - principally Boophilus annulatus - which carry the disease. Unfortunately, Mexico has never developed a country-wide eradication or control program to insure freedom from the serious pests carrying this disease, but relies on a continuous costly minimal control program designed to insure the import requirements of the United States for a limited number of animals per year. In addition to the losses ticks cause in resistant native and Brahma type animals, it seriously limits the development of the desirable though susceptible beef and dairy breeds. 1/ 6/ 12/ 23/

(2) Vesicular stomatitis - Vesicular stomatitis, because of its clinical similarity to foot-and-mouth disease, is a serious and continuing problem. Its existence requires constant attention to insure that affected animals are not in reality suffering from foot-and-mouth disease, which would immediately close Mexico's borders to export of animals or animal products and conceivably lead to a long and costly control program. A previous widespread epidemic to foot-and-mouth disease required the expenditure of nearly \$110,000,000 for eradication by the Joint U.S. and Mexican Foot-and-Mouth Disease Commission. Survey teams continuously investigate vesicular disease outbreaks and the laboratory at Palo Alto regularly types samples of vesicularly affected epithelium to insure prompt accurate diagnosis. Unless small outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease were promptly identified and eradicated, the disease would inevitably again become widespread and it is doubtful

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if another large-scale eradication program such as that undertaken in 1946-1954

could be successfully organized. 1/ 6/ 7/ 18/

(3) Rabies - The most serious and insidious form of rabies (derringue or bat rabies) in Mexico causes considerable loss in livestock in addition to being a major public health problem. There is currently no solution to the infection in bats, but an effort is being made to provide an embryonated vaccine capable of immunising stock in affected areas. So far the livestock vaccination program has not achieved spectacular results but livestock owners are increasingly recognizing the need to protect livestock against this disease. Rabies among canines and wild carnivora is

also an unsolved problem in Mexico. 6/ 8/ 10/ 11/ 23/

(4) Brucellosis - Three forms of brucellosis (B. abortus, B. melitensis and B. suis) are recognized as widespread in Mexico. Brucella abortus among dairy herds is the most serious in metropolitan areas and Brucella melitensis is particularly serious in rural areas where sheep and goat populations are high. Investigations of the true incidence of the disease are chiefly limited to efforts instigated by the

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 Pan American Health Organization. Control programs in bovine dairy animals consist in a limited Strain 19 vaccination and efforts to reduce the spread to human popula-

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 tion through various pasteurization schemes. The Pan American Health Organization has been planning a pilot vaccination project among goats using an experimental melitensis vaccine strain. An effort has also been made to organize goat herd cooperatives in order to reduce human contact infection and establish a practical means of pasteurizing milk products. 6/ 13/ 28/

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(5) Anthrax - Sporadic anthrax outbreaks take a heavy toll among Mexican livestock. However, most progressive livestock producers conduct regular annual vaccination, thus reducing losses in the better managed herds and flocks. 1/ 6/ 28/

(6) Tuberculosis - No extensive tests have been undertaken to determine the incidence of bovine tuberculosis in animals. The limited surveys conducted indicate the incidence is high, and the ascendancy of human tuberculosis caused by the bovine strain in the past few years indicate this disease may be a more serious problem than had been anticipated. Efforts to extend pasteurization in major cities may help to reduce the extension in the human population, but no program exists to reduce or eliminate the basic reservoir of infection. 1/ 6/ 12/ 13/

(7) Other important animal diseases - Other important bovine diseases are hemorrhagic septicemia, blackleg, nutritional deficiency conditions, and a host of parasitic infestations. Sheep are affected by many of these same diseases and, in addition, suffer seriously from scabies. Hog cholera and swine erysipelas are common diseases in swine and poultry suffer from Newcastle's disease, leucosis, pullorosis, and a wide variety of parasitic infestations. 1/ 6/ 10/ 13/ 28/

D. Veterinary organization and administration

1. Civilian

a. Organization - The organization of veterinary services in Mexico is extremely fluid, depending on changes in the Secretary of Agricultural or sub-secretarial position. With almost every shift in key personnel a reorganization takes place which may involve every position and responsibility throughout the structure. In general, the entire veterinary personnel force in Mexico is employed in some official government capacity. However, the salary scales are so low at all

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levels that veterinarians are either permitted to practice or obtain outside employment. As a consequence, there is little possibility for control or supervision of regulatory responsibilities.

Theoretically, the Subsecretary for Livestock and Veterinary Affairs is responsible for administration of five main departments headed by Director Generals:

(1) Animal Health and Sanitation; (2) Institute for Animal Investigation; (3) Milk Production; (4) Meat Production; and (5), Port and Frontier Quarantine Control. See Chart I: Organization of Veterinary Services in Mexico.

Chart I

The Department for Animal Health and Sanitation is charged with conducting the animal health programs and disease reporting in eight zones.

The Institute for Animal Investigation is responsible for the principal laboratory diagnostic service and the production of vaccines.

The Milk Production Department is concerned with the sanitation of dairies or milk processing plants and enforcing the regulations and standards for the various grades of licensed milk.

The Meat Production Department supervises ante and post-mortem inspection of animals and regulates the establishments licensed for meat distribution.

The Port and Frontier Quarantine and Control Department is chiefly responsible for inspection and issuing the certificates required for export animals or animal products. It also regulates the quarantine and control of imported animals - a system varying from complete laxity to inordinate stringency, depending on the whim and mood of the responsible inspector in charge of the particular operation. 1/2/6/9/10/ 13/22/23/

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b. Legal controls

(1) Licensure - Veterinary graduates are permitted to engage in official duties on a temporary basis. After six months' experience and submission of a satisfactory thesis they are considered fully qualified and granted the degree of Medico Veterinario Zootecnista. 1/ 3/ 6/ 10/

(2) Quarantine - The chief quarantine and control activity is the inspection and certification of animals for export, principally to the United States. Since such animals are inspected further at border points by U.S. veterinary officials, this service is generally carried out rather effectively. Imported animals and animal products are also inspected and at least theoretically controlled according to established requirements.

Internal quarantine or restriction of movement orders regarding diseased animals is often ignored. Even in the period of foot-and-mouth disease eradication such orders were often seriously resisted, despite the use of armed forces for policing these restrictions. 1/ 6/ 10/ 28/

(3) Inspection - Milk regulations governing three grades of pasteurized milk are in force in Mexico City, and similar orders are in effect in a few other large cities. Discovery of substandard factors at collection and processing centers or by random sampling theoretically leads to investigation. If the source of contamination or adulteration is in a producing dairy delivery is supposed to be suspended. Rare suspensions probably do not prevent the milk from entering other market channels. Recent attempts by the Ministry of Public Health to organize cooperative inspected pasteurization facilities for small producers have not been successful.

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Meat inspection regulations, covering slaughterhouses and meat distribution, exist in Mexico City and a few other large population centers. The actual inspection is cursory or neglected. 1/ 6/ 10/ 23/

e. Professional veterinary organization - Two principal veterinary associations have been established in Mexico. The first, The Association of Veterinarians and Zootechnicians of Mexico (Colegio de Medicos Veterinarios Zoetecistas de Mexico), opened to qualified veterinarians has a number of constituent state associations. It has little influence over its members and is chiefly a social representation of the profession. The second, the Academy of Veterinary Medicine of Mexico (Academia de Medicina Veterinaria de Mexico), is an honorary association whose membership is selectively based on accomplishment in the veterinary profession. 6/ 12/ 13/

d. Veterinary research - Veterinary research, other than that conducted by international organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization on rabies, caprine brucellosis and tuberculosis, and the Rockefeller Foundation on poultry diseases, is practically non-existent in Mexico. The National Veterinary School's research is poorly organized and generally of little significance. 3/4/6/12/13/

f. Emergency veterinary services - The Mexican veterinary services are incapable of organizing or operating emergency services without technical and financial assistance from outside sources. The emergency measures to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease, 1947-1954, is an example of this incapacity of Mexican veterinary authorities to operate alone. Indeed, the conduct of this project demonstrates many instances of willful abdication of responsibility in the face of political and economic pressure. Without the firm support, direction and advice of U.S. veterinary

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authorities this type emergency program could not have been contemplated. ^{6/1/19/21/22/23/}

2. Military veterinary organization

The Mexican Armed Forces maintains a veterinary service whose chief function is care of military transport and show animals. During active operation of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Eradication Program by the Joint U.S./Mexican Commission, veterinary officers were seconded to and paid by the Commission and, at the same time, maintained their military status. ^{6/}

E. Veterinary Manpower

Slightly more than 400 veterinarians are active in Mexico. However, a numerical figure is misleading since virtually all Mexican veterinarians, including official government employees, are engaged in some activity other than normal function. In respect to government duties where outside activity is of a veterinary nature, this condition may be advantageous for animal health since the official support in the way of material and facilities is notably lacking - thus preventing the veterinarian from accomplishing the purpose of assignment.

It is obvious that the ratio of veterinarians to livestock population is far below minimum requirements, that ineffective use is made of available veterinarians, and that under current circumstances there is little incentive to stimulate improvement in these situations.

Veterinarians employed by the Secretariat of Agriculture are assigned to regions and districts, but supervision and standards for regulatory work are so ill-defined that little disease investigation or control is accomplished. The assignment, in effect, is regarded as a subsidy and the major remuneration is derived from outside activity.

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The conditions described above pertain as well to the faculty of the National Veterinary School. Although school authorities list 47 full-time and 39 part-time faculty members, most of these teachers conduct course work according to circumstances of their own choosing. Consequently, student moral is low and disciplines are flagrantly violated. 2/ 3/ 6/ 10/ 13/ 20/

F. Veterinary medical facilities

The major veterinary medical facilities in Mexico are located at the National School of Veterinary Medicine with its ambulatory clinic, the official government laboratory at Palo Alto, the veterinary units of several regional agricultural colleges or experiment stations and the growing number of artificial insemination centers. The laboratories of the Ministry of Health are utilized for some diagnostic work in the zoonoses. Well distributed regional diagnostic laboratories are lacking and full use is not made of the facilities that do exist. A few small animal hospitals operated by private practitioners have been established in the larger cities. 3/4/6/10/13/

G. Veterinary supplies and materials

Mexico produces less than 20 percent of current veterinary biological and pharmaceutical requirements. Recently, efforts have been made to augment the production of brucellosis vaccine and antigen and rabies vaccine at the Palo Alto laboratory.

Most of the veterinary medicaments are imported and distributed through local agents of a number of foreign firms predominantly United States, German or British.

Most progressive livestock raisers regularly use a variety of animal health products, but distribution of such material to small farmers, particularly in remote areas, is uncommon.

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In no single instance, except in the production of foot-and-mouth disease vaccine by the Joint Commission at Palo Alto, has a nationally supported plan for production of vaccine, sera, antigens or other biological products provided sufficient material for the project for which it was designed. The production of an embryonized vaccine for cattle, against bat rabies (derringue), is apparently approaching the required volume to satisfy requirements of the Pan American Health Organization supported pilot project. 1/ 6/ 7/ 10/ 12/ 13/ 16/ 17/

H. Reference data - Chart I: Organization of the Veterinary Services in Mexico.

I. Comments on principal sources

1. Evaluation - Source material on Mexican veterinary affairs was reasonably adequate to provide essential information. Details relative to incidence of animal diseases, specific distribution and description of responsibilities for veterinarians was lacking. However, estimates of these situations by a number of competent observers were readily available.

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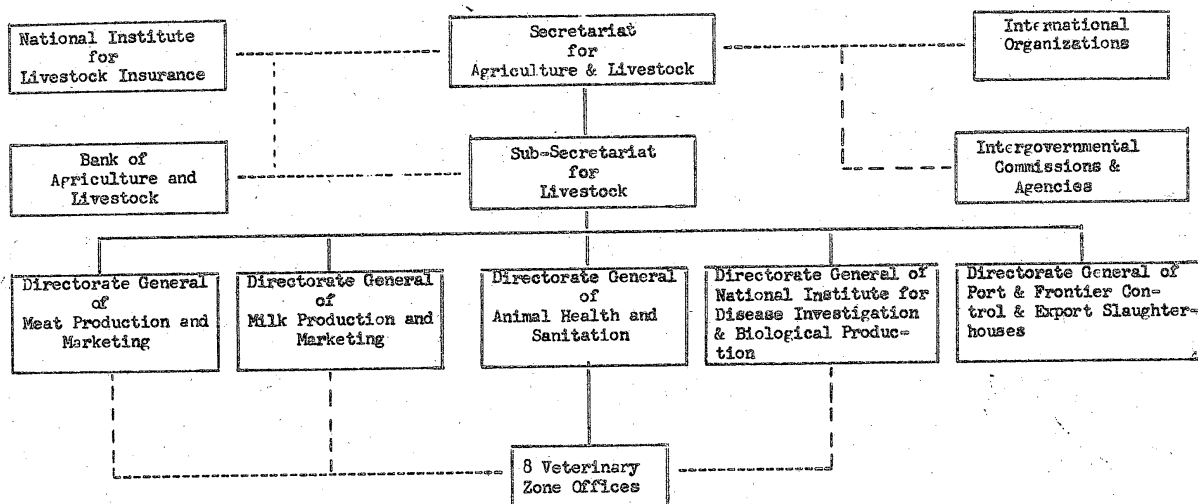
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Chart I: Organization of Veterinary Services in Mexico - 1957.



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