

Unit 1: The Animal health industry Factsheet

Livestock are a feature of farms in the UK with units increasing in size. The health and welfare of these animals is of major concern to all in the food chain, from producer to consumer.

It therefore follows that the animal health care industry is large and complex. It is comprised of:

- The government animal health departments
- The pharmaceutical industry
- The health care professionals

1. The government animal health departments

The Government has responsibility for:

- State health programmes
- Disease eradication schemes
- Prevention of notifiable diseases
- Food safety
- Disease diagnosis at veterinary laboratories

2. The pharmaceutical industry

The use of animal medicines in the prevention and control of disease is necessary

Products include:

- Vaccines
- Antibiotics
- Stomach worm and fluke drench
- Sheep dips
- Disinfectants
- Fertility hormones
- In feed medication

3. Professional services

The following are involved in the health care of farm animals at some level:

- Farmers
- Veterinary surgeons
- Veterinary nurses
- Foot trimmers
- Consultants from pharmaceutical companies
- Research officers

The History of the animal health care industry

From farriers to veterinarians

Changes in animal doctoring

The existence of iron horse shoes has been traced back to Britain before the Roman invasion. The Farrier's knowledge extended far beyond the art of shoeing and incorporated horse anatomy, condition, management and disease. The farrier performed bleeding, treated wounds and injuries, diagnosed disease and produced medicine for their treatment.

Many people still call the vet the 'farrier'.

In 1791, the veterinary college, London was established in response to the desire for a better understanding of animal husbandry and disease.

Historical tools of the trade!

Fleam - a bleeding tool



The pictures on this page are taken from the museum of veterinary history

<http://www.rvc.ac.uk/AboutUs/Services/Museums/Museum.cfm#tour>

The fleam was an instrument with a sharp triangular blade which made an incision in the flesh or vein when hit by a small truncheon, called a blood stick. The instrument usually had two or three fleam blades of different thicknesses graded by size which folded side by side into a cover. The set also might include a lancet (a sharp pointed blade).

The early animal medicines

Numerous recipes and remedies existed for the cure of colds, coughs and influenza in farm animals, including the horse

From homemade potions to antibiotics

Antibiotics have revolutionised animal care in the 20th century.

Penicillin was the first antibiotic, discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1929 and large scale fermentation processes were developed for the production of antibiotics.

Preventative medicines

With the advances in research emphasis was placed on the prevention of illnesses in animals. It was seen as better farming and more profitable.

Homeopathic medicines

Homeopathy is the curing of animal illnesses using natural remedies. In organic situations it is used significantly

From curing to preventing by health planning

Farm Health Planning helps to prevent diseases and improves the performance of the livestock. By working closely with a vet or other adviser, targets are set for the animals' health and welfare and the steps needed to take are written down. The use of vaccines as a preventative measure is a key part of Health Planning

The increasing importance of welfare in farm animals

During the past 20 years there has been an increase in the profile of animal welfare issues. As a result there has been better monitoring of farms under the guise of farm assurance schemes, prompted by the food safety act (1990).

Examples of farm assurance schemes:

- FAWL - Farm assured welsh livestock
- NDFAS - National dairy farm assurance
- FABBL - Farm assured British beef and lamb
- ABM - Assured British meats