

## ANTE-MORTEM PROBLEMS

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a real pleasure today to speak to you for a few minutes on "Ante-Mortem Problems", insofar as it concerns the Meat Inspection Division of the Health of Animals Branch of the Canada Department of Agriculture. The Canada Meat Inspection Act and Regulations, and the Humane Slaughter of Food Animals Act and the Humane Slaughter Regulations, provide the authority under which the national system of meat inspection is carried out in Canada.

Approximately ninety per cent of all red meat and poultry slaughter is done in plants operating under this legislation.

The Regulations state that: "No animal shall be slaughtered in an establishment unless the animal has been inspected by a veterinary inspector on the day of slaughter prior to its entry onto the killing floor".

This, in itself, proves a problem in that an educational programme is necessary to stimulate a veterinarian to be present and conduct the inspection when the slaughter commences at 6:30 a.m. each morning.

I can recall some twenty-five years ago, when I was somewhat of an apprentice, some veterinarians thought that more could be revealed by post-mortem than by ante-mortem inspection. Several events in the last few years have done much to change that attitude. Canada has been a country free of foot-and-mouth disease except for a brief period in 1952. The outbreak occurred in Saskatchewan, almost 3,000 miles from the Atlantic coast and well over 1,000 miles from the Pacific. Who would expect an outbreak in this location? Well, no one did and, actually, the disease had gained quite a foothold when the scourge was noticed in ante-mortem inspection at one of the establishments registered for federal inspection.

I would like to mention one other incident. Canada follows the slaughter compensation policy for outbreaks of hog cholera or swine cholera as you would call it.

In the fall of 1961, one of our ante-mortem veterinary inspectors reported hog cholera in swine delivered to one of the registered establishments in the Montreal area of the Province of Quebec. Laboratory diagnosis confirmed the alarm and the struggle was on -quarantines, licences to slaughter, trace-back, contacts, slaughter and burial of infected herds, disinfection of buildings and, of course, the payment of compensation. Investigation revealed that this was an outbreak of a more chronic type of hog cholera than usual. This was another occasion where ante-mortem inspection aided in the control of reportable diseases in Canada.

Animals suffering from diseases, such as anthrax, rabies, tetanus and external epithelioma of the eye, are condemned on ante-mortem and never go near the slaughter department. Boars are also condemned on ante-mortem.

Ante-mortem inspection of immature calves is a continuous problem. The Regulations at one time stated that calves were required to be 21 days old before slaughter. But because good food and care as well as age are important factors in maturity, the time factor for calves was deleted. Immaturity in calves is found in areas where there is dairy farming and rarely is it found in the beef areas. I am sure that other nations have the same problem, as we have requests for importations of "Bobby Veal" and of calf livers well below our  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pound minimum.

Animals suffering from such conditions as parturition and railway sickness are marked HELD if it is apparent that recovery can be effected in a few days.

Crippled and injured animals may be HELD on ante-mortem to be slaughtered at the appropriate time, usually at the end of the kill.

Ante-mortem inspection of poultry is not conducted on the individual basis to the same extent as the large animal, but it serves a very useful purpose in detecting respiratory diseases and other conditions warranting segregation, and slaughtering separately from the healthy birds.

Ante-mortem inspection is conducted by veterinarians. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the volume of slaughter operations. In 1908 the kill was 2,427,000 cattle, calves and sheep, and 104,000 chickens, conducted by 39 veterinarians in 27 registered establishments. Today, there are some 180 registered establishments, and in 1966 the kill was 10,336,926 cattle, calves, swine, sheep and horses, rabbits and goats and 132,426,000 poultry supervised by 320 veterinarians aided by 544 technical personnel. This growth, particularly since the Second World War of 1939-1945, has changed the veterinary picture and there is a steady recruiting programme which has barely kept pace with the demand for professional staff.

The Meat Inspection Division is often involved with the inspection of wild life - buffaloes, reindeer and even whales.

Last year, 247 buffalo were slaughtered. Ante-mortem on these bison was conducted to the point where tuberculosis and brucellosis tests were carried out.

It would appear that, within a few months, there will be a plant conducting reindeer slaughter under our jurisdiction. Ante-mortem inspection in this connection presents a problem but we expect to be able to meet it by controlled herding.

In 1959 Canada enacted legislation requiring more rigid observance of humane slaughter. I would like to mention, however, while operations in general have been satisfactory, that there are one or two areas, where humane slaughter presents difficulties.

In cattle, the captive bolt pistol is used with excellent

results except that almost all brains are damaged and, therefore, cannot be salvaged for food. Rendering hogs unconscious with CO<sup>2</sup> has been found quite satisfactory. In the case of electric stunning, more care has to be used to ensure that there is no "splashing" of blood.

Poultry and rabbits do not come under the Humane Slaughter Act, but in most plants they are anaesthetized with electric stunning devices. Care must be exercised to ensure that an anaesthetizing and not a lethal dose is given. Improper bleeding results if the dose is lethal.

This year 1967 is a milestone in Meat Inspection in Canada. For two or three years, whale slaughter has been under inspection on a trial basis at one location. This year, we have five locations. Practically all of the edible meat is already sold to foreign countries and our officers will be required to certify each shipment, however, so far we will be able to delete the words "ante-mortem" on the certificate. If we are required to carry out ante-mortem inspection then we would be required to station a Veterinarian on each catcher.

Ante-mortem inspection has contributed much to disease control in Canada and it has gone far to ensure that only healthy animals are presented for slaughter. Our meat products have found their way into trade channels throughout the world largely because of this factor.

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1. Ante-mortem inspection was responsible for uncovering exotic diseases in Canada.
2. Certain diseases and conditions which call for condemnation and total destruction of the carcass when detected and ante-mortem.
3. Ante-mortem inspection insofar as bison, reindeer and whales are concerned.
4. Volume of Ante-Mortem inspection.
5. A few remarks regarding humane slaughter.