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## Continuous publication from now on...

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This fourth issue of *Veterinary Sciences Tomorrow* - the last in the traditional, numbered format - will conclude the 2001 volume of our publication initiative. Starting next year, we will implement a 'first come, first served' principle of publishing your material, and this is how it will work:

An author submitting a manuscript will be notified about its arrival, and the paper will be sent out immediately to two members of our International Editorial Board (IEB) to be refereed. The Board presently contains some 70 members, who have been chosen on the basis of their fields of speciality so that 33 disciplines and/or 15 animal species are represented. On receiving a manuscript, the IEB members are required to inform us whether they will be able to assess the paper quickly (by a given deadline) and their reports will lead to the familiar accept/reject/modify decision (we will probably continue using terms like 'paper' and 'manuscript', though they are anachronisms, of course, from the quill-and-parchment age).

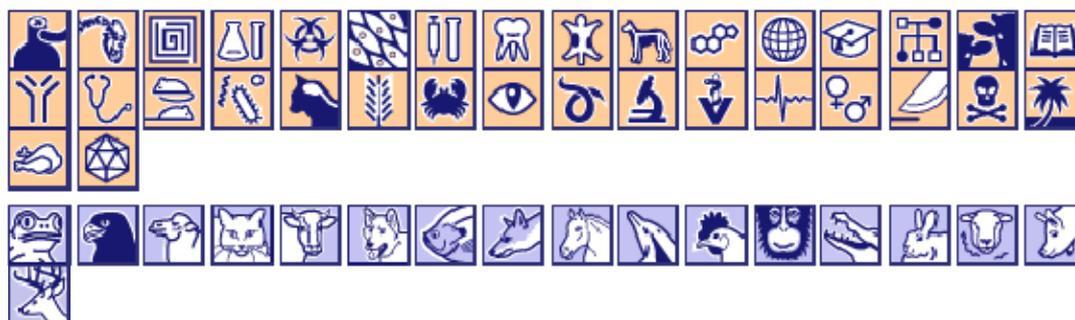
The statements 'accept as is' and 'reject' need no explanation, but when dealing with the decision 'modify' we should like to follow a somewhat different format - it is not new, but as far as I know has not been implemented before in the veterinary sciences. As usual, the author will be asked to make the referees suggested modifications to his/her paper, but will leave it essentially unchanged - and an edited version of the referees' remarks will be published with the article, as a commentary. The effects of this *modus operandi* are manifold:

1. The author sees his/her paper published with ideas unchanged, but perhaps focused or put in a different perspective
2. The referee sees his/her criticism published, and thus the considerable work involved in refereeing a manuscript is not lost and is seen by others
3. The dialogue principle of scientific exchange is implemented; readers at large are encouraged to join in the discussion
4. New contacts are established
5. Courtesy and consideration are exercised

Back to the 'first-come-first-served' principle: as soon as the modified original, with its accompanying illustrations, and the two referees reports are in our hands, they will be prepared for electronic publication, using a piece of back office software specially developed for us by [Roquade](#), and will be available on the web within an hour or so. With

the exception of the News items, all sections of the journal should eventually be managed in this way.

Which brings me to the News column. Our statistics show that it is the least visited section of *Veterinary Sciences Tomorrow*, and we ask ourselves why this is so. I suspect the column escapes the attention of our readers, so we have decided to make it more attractive. Our graphic artists (Eend) have designed a set of icons to identify News items (as well as other items e.g. review articles) by subject and/or animal species and thus should direct you immediately to items in your field of interest - discipline-wise as well as animal species-wise. Here are the icons:



You may want to test your eidetic imagination by trying to find out what the pictograms mean - a hint: they are arranged in alphabetical order - and if you hover your cursor over an icon the discipline or species it represents will be revealed.

In addition, to make the News section more veterinary and less esoteric (biomedical), we have contacted the deans and research directors of most veterinary teaching institutions (more than 100), editors of veterinary journals, presidents of veterinary research societies etc. for feedback. We expect them to send us news items of biomedical and/or veterinary importance or interest from their respective organisations. What we want to achieve is obvious - community building by stimulating intellectual exchange amongst the birds of different plumage, so to speak. Some introspection may be in place here.

The veterinary sciences have an unambiguous mission in the life sciences arena: they provide the knowledge and experimental arsenal required to explore, employ, optimise and protect the unique potential that animals offer to mankind. This potential differs with the type of relationship entertained between man and animals. It varies between the extremes of companionship and exploitation, between mutuality and selfishness. Though ethical categories - responsibility and stewardship - become more and more embedded in the thinking of particularly affluent societies, there can be no doubt that man-animal relationships remain anthropocentric, even in the Western world where the role of nature with all its facets has undergone dramatic changes in the last few decades. Veterinary research has either led or followed these societal tendencies: knowledge-driven in its academic form, its results will eventually be applied for the benefit, profit and enjoyment

of man. Similar considerations apply to environmental sciences: they are equally anthropocentric in that they focus on the influence of man on ecosystems and - as a consequence - the subsequent impact on man and animal.

In summary, we are dealing here with man:

- As an owner/user of animals (treatment and prevention of animal diseases, animal welfare)
- As a producer/consumer of animals (veterinary public and environmental health, animal welfare)
- As an inhabitant of the same ecosystem as animals (zoonoses, environmental health, wildlife welfare)

In line with the emphasis on veterinary sciences rather than on veterinary medicine, 'veterinary research' is defined here as biomedical research - including environmental health and risk analysis studies - in a veterinary environment. This definition would cover the entire spectrum ranging from comparative pathobiology (implemented in clinical veterinary medicine) to veterinary public and environmental health, the latter by studying:

- The mechanisms by which vertebrates (companion and farm animals as well as those of the wild fauna) can expose man to pathogens and allergens,
- The mechanisms by which farm animal products may threaten the health of consumers, and
- The ways by which man contaminates animal products, through the environment and/or animal feed, and - more generally - by which he jeopardises animal health and welfare through the environment.

On a lighter - and more provocative - note I have formulated the Ten Commandments for deans of veterinary research and teaching institutions; here they are:

1. No veterinary faculty can be leading in all disciplines (choices)
2. Crossing frontiers must become a habit (interdisciplinarity)
3. The sabbatical leave is mandatory, but must be earned (privileges)
4. Human Resources Management must include academic prima donnas (sympathy)
5. Teaching staff without a research task is a no-no (credibility)
6. Didactic quality must be an assessment element equivalent to research in career planning (balance)
7. Excellent scientists must not be made into mediocre administrators (talent)
8. Academic career planning must include the aging scientist (opportunities)
9. Routine life-long appointments are anachronistic (sunset clause)
10. Continuity of research must be an objective ('second-in-command' policy)

What do you think? Care to comment or object?

We will be in touch more frequently with you, our readers, from now on, sending broadcasts to indicate what may be of interest to you. To better serve you, a future login screen will contain questions about your specialties. Should you not want to be bothered by us in the future, send us an unsubscribe message and we will delete you from our databases. If this does not happen immediately, please be tolerant - managing some 10,000 addresses is not that easy, and we are amateurs (see my last editorial for a definition).

In the next editorial (no issue, as I said above) I will discuss how we want to sustain our operation. Any ideas you may have are highly appreciated.

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Editor-in-chief