

# The Wylie Centenary Flyer

May 2008



## 100 Years Of Variety!

Although Wylie's no longer treat large animals the practice has a long history of attending to any animal requiring help, whether it be a farm animal, a pet or a wild creature. Even in the last few years we have been called upon to treat a porpoise and a Minke Whale, and when a travelling circus needed help we added a camel, llama and elephant to the list!

Now we specialise in 'small animals' but that includes many species other than dogs and cats. As well as the usual 'children's pets', rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters and rats, it also includes ferrets, chinchillas, reptiles and birds. Our exotics expert, William Lewis, operated on a crocodile recently!

New farming ventures always bring challenges to the veterinary profession, and in other parts of the country our colleagues may have deer and llama farms to deal with. But learning about these other species is not new. Back in 1908, The Veterinary Record contained a review of a book on the 'Diseases and Parasites of Ostriches'!

1908 was 40 years before the advent of the NHS, and there were concerns that 'medical men', with no training in other species, were giving advice on poultry and 'fancy' birds, and 'charging 1/6 – 2/6 which is better than a human being given medicine and advice at 6d or 1/- a time!' Although the veterinary profession was already 'going strongly for the study and practice of the diseases of the dog and cat', vets were urged to also 'go into the study of the diseases of poultry and other small animals.'



At this time rabbits were kept for food and certainly never came into the house! Now they are the 3rd most popular pet in the UK, and many live indoors, giving owners the chance to fully appreciate their characters. The devastating viral disease *Myxoematosis* was deliberately introduced into Australia in 1919, and then into France in 1952. It arrived in Kent the next year – although whether by accident or design is not known. 99% of Britain's wild rabbits were soon dead, and even today numbers are still only half those of 100 years ago.

Thankfully we have a *Myxoematosis* vaccination available for your pet rabbit. Come this month and you will not only get piece of mind - but a Centenary gift as well!

Editor: **Kathy Beasley**

## Life Before Antibiotics!

Life before the discovery of antibiotics is hard to imagine. Yet the first antibiotic, penicillin, was only discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1929, and it was not until the 1940's that the true potential of antibiotics was realised. Other antibiotics followed, firstly sulphonamides in 1935 and then streptomycin, chloramphenicol and tetracycline after World War II. The war speeded up the research, and when these antibiotics were tested on animals they were found to be safe in most species.

Arthur Wylie had no antibiotics to help him fight infections in 1908. 'Bier's Hyperaemic Treatment' had been developed in Germany for use in people, and involved the application of elastic bandages or suction glasses to an affected limb. It was thought to aid the destruction of bacteria and prevent the absorption of poisons, but was difficult to apply safely to animals.

An article in the Veterinary Record informed readers of the benefits of intra-tracheal injections of iodine for the treatment of 'joint-ill', a bacterial arthritis in foals. 'The patient is held in a corner and the head kept slightly up for 10 minutes or so after the injection. Usually 5-6 doses are enough.' This was considered more effective than other remedies such as dilute injections of formalin over the affected joints!

Unfortunately 'drug adulteration' was 'very prevalent'. Powdered Gentian was used a lot, but came from abroad, and often contained a high proportion of ground olive stones rendering it 'devoid of medicinal value'. Similarly it was advised not to buy opium in powdered form as 'it is very liable to be adulterated' while powdered 'African' ginger contaminated with capsicum essence had caused 'severe irritation to cattle'.

## New Ideas For A New Century!

Arguments for and against medical research are not new. In 1908 a new society was formed, the Research Defence Society, with its aim 'to make known the facts as to experiments on animals in this country; the immense importance to the welfare of mankind of such experiments; and the great saving of human life and health directly attributable to them.' Despite this it was admitted in the Veterinary Record that 'many experiments have been performed – which, to put it very mildly, were both cruel and useless'. 'The truth is that suffering very often takes place, but that it is very seldom inflicted wantonly or needlessly.'

On the same subject a letter was printed from the Honourable Secretary of the National Canine Defence League, now known as the 'Dog's Trust'. The NCDL was founded in 1891 'to protect dogs from torture and ill-usage of every kind'. A 'small party of gentlemen' assembled during the first Crufts Dog Show, vowed to 'campaign for the protection of stray dogs', 'the provision of adequate veterinary care', and 'to campaign against muzzling, prolonged chaining and experimentation on dogs'. 'While indignantly protesting against the vivisection of *any* animal, we ask all humane persons to support the movement which aims at delivering the 'friend of man' from torture.'

It is comforting to know that, despite the lack of alternatives at the time, and the harshness of life in general, people were still concerned for their fellow creatures. This was before World War I, and at a time that suffragettes were campaigning for women's votes. A speaker at one veterinary college was pleased that the students' 'lady friends' 'did not follow the habits of certain ladies who were going about the country just now!' However, dairymaids may not have wanted equality – they 'were much cleaner than men because they did not have to clean out pigsties and then go straight to milk the cows'!

