Professor James H. Gillespie (1917 – 2011)

Obituary:

James Howard Gillespie, Professor and Head of the Microbiology Department, NYS College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University, a well known and internationally recognized virologist, died on the 10th of January 2011 in Ithaca, USA. Born in Bethlehem Pennsylvania, USA, he commenced his studies in the Department of Veterinary Medicine at Pennsylvania University. During the World War II he served in the American Army as a lieutenant in a Veterinary Medicine Corps in China. After leaving the army he became employed as a poultry pathologist at the New Hampshire University. In 1946 he began to work at Cornell University, initially in the Laboratory of Poultry Diseases, Department of Pathology and Bacteriology, College of Veterinary Medicine. In 1950 he was appointed Assistant Director of the newly founded Veterinary Virus Research Institute established by dr. J. Andrew Baker.

The scientific interests of Dr. J. H. Gillespie concentrated around infectious diseases of dogs, cattle, and swine and later on also horses. In the 50ties intensive research was led on diagnostics and immunoprophylaxis of canine distemper. In the area of immunoprophylaxis of young puppies examined, among others, was the possibility of using the heterological vaccine against measles. For many years it was believed that very young puppies are not capable of producing antibody against the canine distemper. It was the achievement of Professor Gillespie to elaborate a nomogram – of the antibody level in bitches, which allowed to determine the proper time of puppies vaccination. Professor J.H. Gillespie also proved the existing possibility of using more than one virus in the canine vaccine. The results of his research led to the production of multivalent vaccines.

Professor Gillespie was engaged in scientific research on bovine virus diarrhea – mucosal disease, infectious bovine rhinotracheitis and bovine pustular vulvovaginitis) The team of Professor Gillespie was also engaged in research on foal rotavirus and initiated a research program on virus feline diseases.

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