

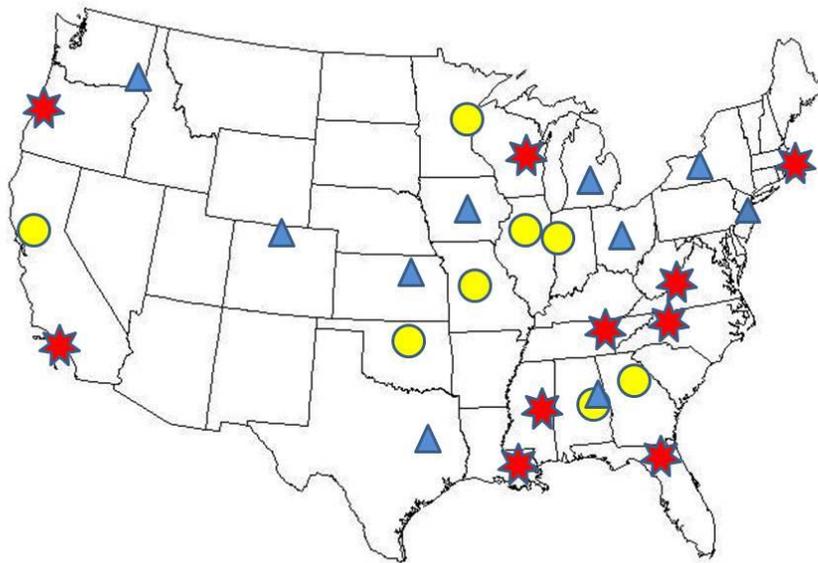
## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# The 28 Veterinary Colleges in the United States, Part II

By Dr. Donald F. Smith  
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The veterinary profession has undergone profound changes since the AVMA was established in 1863.<sup>1</sup> Starting as a largely equine profession with the strongest presence in cities and with ties to human medicine, veterinary medicine became largely a country profession with the advent of the internal combustion engine.

As shown in the following figures, there is a major disconnect between the location of our veterinary colleges and urban centers. The University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine is the only educational institution affiliated with a top-ten medical school, and only one top-ten school of public health has a veterinary college on the same campus (University of Minnesota).

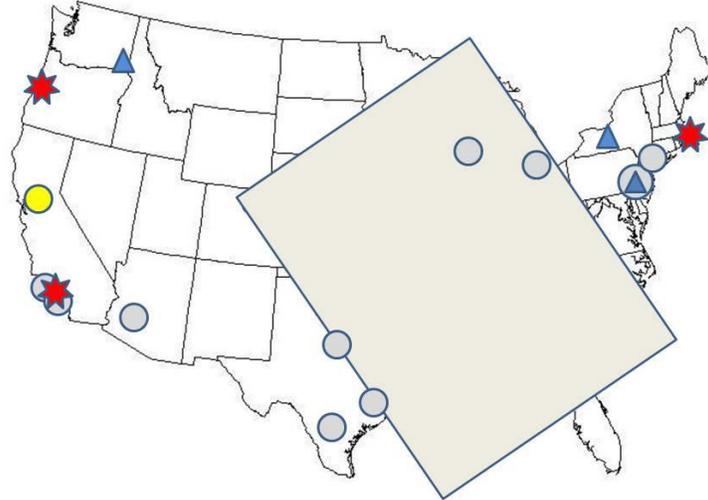


*Location of the 28 veterinary colleges in the United States: 1868-1916 (blue triangles); post World War II (yellow circles); late 1960s to 1998 (red stars).<sup>2</sup>*

Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of veterinarians have been working in some aspect of companion animal medicine for decades and that we have been promoting the importance of comparative medicine as a critical component of both human and animal health

for over a century, public funding for veterinary medicine is still considered the responsibility of state departments of agriculture.

The majority of our veterinary colleges are clustered in the midsection of the country, away from the population centers of the East and West Coasts and the Southwest.



*Three-quarters of the veterinary colleges in the U.S. (all but seven) are located in the area covered by the rectangular shaded area.*

*Location of the ten largest cities in 2013 (gray circles).*

*See legend for previous map describing symbols for college location (triangle, circle, star).<sup>3</sup>*

Unlike in human medicine, where the location of the major academic medical centers is proportional to the degree of urbanization, most of the academic medical centers in veterinary medicine are in rural communities, far from the places where most of the nation's people have their pets. Starting in the 1930's and even before, this deficit has been filled by the private sector in ever-expanding small animal clinics and specialty hospitals.

This is not to imply that veterinary colleges should not have access to production animals and other large animals critical to the comparative education of the current and future generations of veterinarians. However, we have an imbalance that is out of sync with the full range of societal needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Quite simply, I feel that the result of this geographic imbalance of veterinary college to the national need has led to a functional estrangement from human medicine, an overreliance on the agricultural lobby for state funding of our colleges, and a separation of our colleges from the human and companion animal population centers of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> The forerunner of the AVMA was the USVMA, established in 1863. The name was changed to AVMA in 1898.

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<sup>2</sup> Modified from Smith DF. Lessons of History in Veterinary Medicine. *J Vet Med Educ* 2013;40(1):2-11. Reprinted with permission of the *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, © 2013, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

**KEYWORDS:**

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

*Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine* is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.