

## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# Who Educated Our First Veterinary Deans?

By Dr. Donald F. Smith  
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A Scot by the name of Andrew Smith founded North America's first and longest lasting veterinary institution in 1862, the Ontario Veterinary College.<sup>1</sup> Smith had graduated from the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh (Scotland) and one of his students, Milliken Stalker, became the inaugural dean at Iowa State University, which is the oldest United States college in operation to the present.

Continuing Smith's educational legacy, the founding deans of three United States veterinary colleges were educated at Iowa State: Sofus B. Nelson of Washington State, George H. Glover of Colorado State University, and Charles Allen Cary of Auburn University.



*James Law, seated middle, was the first dean (principal) of the New York State Veterinary College. When he assembled his inaugural faculty in 1896, he was the only one of the six who held a veterinary degree.*

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German-educated Heinrich J. Detmers established the veterinary program at Ohio State University in 1885. His first graduate was Mark Francis who became the inaugural dean at Texas A&M. Francis's impact on animal health was so profound that during Ohio State University's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremonies the university president opined that Francis was the most important graduate of the whole university during its first 75 years of existence. Interestingly,

not only was the first Texas veterinary dean a graduate of Ohio State, but so were the second, third and fourth (and also the eighth).

There are other interesting dean trivia among the Ivy League universities. For example, one of the graduates of Harvard University—yes Harvard had a veterinary college between 1882 and 1901—was Richard P. Lyman Jr, the son of the college’s dean. Lyman Jr became the inaugural dean at Michigan State University’s veterinary college. The first two veterinary deans of the University of Pennsylvania were physicians, as were ten of the original twelve faculty. Cornell was the third and last Ivy League institution to open a veterinary college, under the leadership of James Law. When Law assembled his inaugural faculty in 1896, only one of the six – himself – held a degree in veterinary medicine.

In more recent years, a significant number of deans have also come from foreign countries, having received their initial veterinary degree from universities outside the United States. Most of them have come from present and former British Commonwealth countries, including Canada.

The most geographically diverse cohort of deans, however, has served at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine where the four deans since the college opened received their veterinary degrees on different continents: North America, Europe, South America, and Africa. The four foreign deans currently serving in the US, also received their veterinary degrees from four continents.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid confusion throughout this blog, references to the veterinary college or veterinary school name or the university name is based upon the current name of the school, college or university, not the name that was used at the time. Also, “dean” might have been designated as head, principal, or director (or dean) at the time.

KEYWORDS:

Milliken Stalker  
Sofus Nelson  
Charles Cary  
George Glover  
James Law  
Richard Lyman  
Andrew Smith  
Heinrich Detmers  
Mark Francis  
Harvard Veterinary College  
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies  
Ontario Veterinary College  
Iowa State University

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Cornell University  
University of Pennsylvania  
Texas A&M University  
Washington State University  
Ohio State University  
Auburn University  
Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine

TOPIC:

Veterinary Deans

LEADING QUESTION:

Where were the early North American deans educated?

META-SUMMARY:

This story traces the lineage of some of the first deans of veterinary medicine in the United States.

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.