

# Is there a veterinarian in the barn?

**KENNETT SQUARE** - According to two veterinary students from the University of Pennsylvania, with the cost of education in the Commonwealth at its present level, going into large animal practice is almost impractical. "The freshman class can expect to pay \$6670 per year for their education," says Michael Burton, Wellsboro, who is in his senior year at Penn. "Depending on the practice a veterinarian goes into, he can make a good

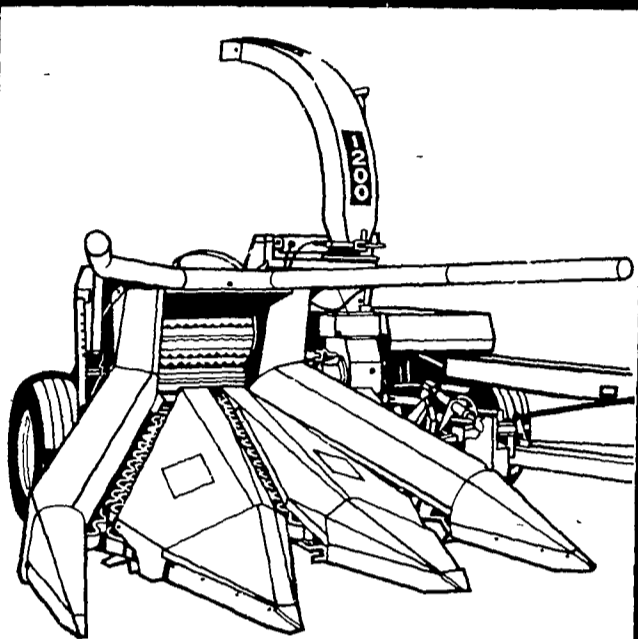
living. For instance, in the city a small animal vet can do well because people are willing to pay for work done on their pets. In that instance, economics isn't a problem - sentimentality is the thing." On the other hand, Burton points out, a farmer is only able to pay a certain medical fee for his stock - any animal costing more than that goes to market. So, says Burton, veterinary students find little monetary incentive to

go into large animal practice because the best opportunities lie in small animals. According to both Burton and Mary Sommer, another senior veterinary student, it takes a determined individual to become a veterinarian. "One out of 10 students who applies gets accepted," says Burton. "It is supposedly easier to get into medical school because there are more med schools in the nation." Dr. Richard McFeely, associate dean for New Bolton Center, supports Burton's statement. "Many students apply several years in succession before they are accepted," he says. "They often go on for further schooling in the meantime." As a result, it is

not uncommon for persons with masters or doctoral degrees to be taking first year classes in the veterinary school. Why is it so tough to get into vet school? Part of the problem lies in the fact that there are only 21 veterinary schools in the nation, and for the most part, students must attend the school in their region. In the Northeast there are only two vet schools - one at Penn and one at Cornell. Pennsylvania residents have virtually no choice but to attend Penn if they choose to practice veterinary medicine. About 70 per cent of Penn's student body is from the Commonwealth, and two-thirds of all veterinarians in the state graduated from Penn. In recounting his own

experiences with applying to vet schools, Mike Burton notes that he was lucky - he was accepted by Penn in his second attempt. "That's a rare story," he points out. Mike did not only apply to the University of Pennsylvania, however. He also applied to schools out of state and found the results discouraging. "They all wrote back saying that if there was one in my state I shouldn't bother applying with them." "Some school don't even bother sending an application if you're from out of state," notes Mary Sommer. But, amazingly enough, the requirements for entrance into veterinary school are not that stringent. "You should have a good

undergraduate grade point," notes Burton. "And, there are some basic requirements such as a few minimum bio courses. But, you can major in almost anything as an undergraduate - the president of our class is an English major." And, what are the chances of getting a job after graduation? Excellent. Although the veterinary school grad can't always get the exact job he or she had in mind, there are more jobs available than there are veterinarians, and chances are high that the graduating vet will locate a job. Mary Sommer and her husband are typical examples. They met in veterinary school and are now graduating with the hopes of going into large animal practice. While they have no fear of being unable to locate a position, they know that finding two rural positions close to each other could be difficult. As a result, they will do some shopping around before they accept job offers. "We'll have to be flexible," Mary says. Mike Burton has a more out-of-the-ordinary interest. He prefers to work with exotic animals and has hopes of locating a position in that area of animal medicine. When asked the percentage of graduating veterinarians who set up their own practices, Mary and Mike replied that perhaps one or two students in each graduating class may be able to do so, but that the cost is prohibitive. At this point, the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania is concerned for its well being. State appropriations were severely cut last year. Monies appropriated by the State this year are the same amount as three years ago. Unless more operating funds are found, tuition, which increased \$1000 this year, will continue to rise and the school could be forced to trim down an already austere program or possibly lose faculty, and thus, quality.



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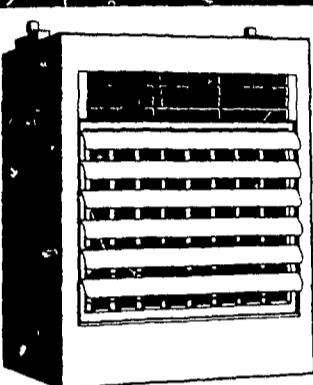
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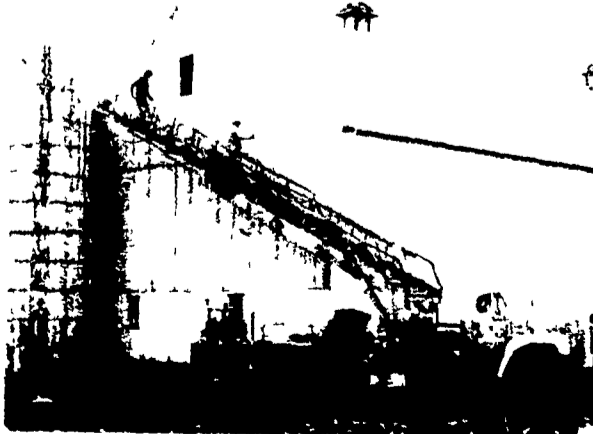


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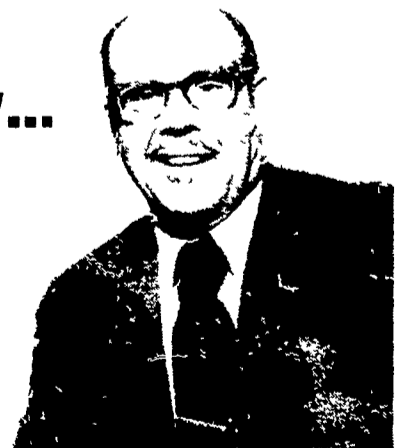


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