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Sheltie Skin Syndrome

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Botulism, the silent killer
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maintains strict control on who uses the vaccine. Farmers and horse owners in that state are required to sign a waiver absolving Kentucky State University of any responsibilities should complications develop.

Dr. Whislock feels the vaccine is safe and that its use would prevent the disease in the highest risk group, the foals. "After the initial three-shot series, mares need an annual booster to keep up the protection," he said. "Botulism, like tetanus, and agricultural industries, remains a real concern in the use of the vaccine."

The protection, he said, "is costly and better means of diagnosis will facilitate earlier treatment, helping to save lives. While the largest number of patients here are horses, we also see it in other animals. Recently we treated a herd of cattle and managed to save some animals by giving the horse antitoxin to the cattle. This will only work once. If those cattle get botulism again they cannot be treated in the same manner because of immune reactions," Dr. Whislock's group recently helped the owner of a pack of hounds who had botulism.

While botulism is of concern in this country, it is of greater frequency in Third World countries where it affects livestock contributing to the loss of valuable food resources. The vaccination study at New Bolton Center was funded by the Equine Medicine Research Fund at New Bolton Center.

Symposium for the Biomedical and Agricultural Industries
Representatives of 24 biomedical and agricultural companies attended the first symposium held at the School on April 16 on this topic. An overview of the research work at the School was given by 28 faculty members. The object of the program was to foster relations between the research enterprise in the School and industry. Short papers in medical genetics, oncostology, and virology, development and metabolism, cardiology and hypertension, respiration and sleep, tissue immunology, epidemiology and parasitology were given to acquaint the symposium participants with the scope of work in progress. The program was received well and the chairman of the event, Dr. Leon Weiss and Dr. Kenneth Bovee, hope to organize another such symposium in 1987.

Shetland Sheep Dog Syndrome
Shetland sheepdog clubs from coast to coast have contributed about $5,000 for a study of "Shetland Skin Disease" here at the School.

"Shetland sheepdogs, as a breed, have skin conditions which have not been diagnosed," said Dr. William Miller, Jr., assistant professor of dermatology. "These conditions really should not be called "Shetland Skin Disease," rather they should be termed Shetland Sheep Dog Syndrome. "Shelties, like other breeds, can have skin problems such as mange, ringworm, and conditions caused by allergens. But frequently they have a condition which still has to be identified. The dog has crusty, scaly patches around the face, tail, and feet and the severity of the disease varies from animal to animal."

Dr. Miller explained that three major diseases are thought to be the cause of Shetland Skin Disease: lupus, dermatomyositis and epidermolysis bullosa. All three have a gross similarity of symptoms and at first glance appear to be the same disorder. However, they are different. Epidermolysis bullosa and dermatomyositis occur when the dog is between the ages of eight weeks and one year. Manifestation of symptoms varies: some animals just show a few crusty, scaly patches while others have a multitude of sores. Lupus, which has the same symptoms, should appear when the animal is older.

"We want to find the frequency of Shetland Skin Syndrome and determine which disease we are dealing with," said Dr. Miller. "We also want to develop a test so that animals can be identified quickly and treatment can be instituted." He explained that dermatomyositis and epidermolysis bullosa are thought to be genetic. "There is a similar syndrome in the collie which has been proven to be dermatomyositis. In that breed it is a dominant trait with varied expressivity." Dr. Miller is looking for severely affected dogs for the study and development of tests. "We have some of the funding for the study but lack the animals to do the study with," he said. "The work is important because if these are genetic diseases the frequency of occurrence can only be controlled through selective breeding."

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