

VETERINARY EDUCATION IN ASSAM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The Veterinary and Animal Health Care activities in Assam started in 1868 when Lord Mayo, the then Viceroy of India appointed a Commission to report the diseases of cattle in the country and to suggest measures required for their prevention and control. In the year 1912, Mr. William Harris was appointed as the 1st Superintendent of Civil Veterinary Department, Assam under the Director of Land Records and Agriculture. In 1940, the designation of Superintendent was changed to the Director of Veterinary Department. From that time onwards till 1948, steps were initiated to strengthen the veterinary services in the state by creating infrastructure facilities in the form of establishing the directorate and other veterinary institutions and by implementing various disease control schemes. However, in order to meet the growing demands for veterinary graduates for service in the State, the *Assam Veterinary College* was established on 18th August 1948 at Nagaon with a three year diploma course in the line of Calcutta, Patna and Bombay Veterinary Colleges.

Initially, the college was started with 33 matriculate students and eight teachers. The college started with a 3-year diploma course leading to “Graduate in Veterinary Science” (G.V.Sc.). Dr. G.K. Mehra acted as the first Principal-in-charge, while Dr. J.M. Bujarbaruah was the Vice-Principal. Later Dr. R.R. Gulati became the first permanent Principal of the college. Initially the diploma course included six professional subjects, *viz.* Anatomy, Breeding, Animal Husbandry, Surgery, Pathology and Medicine. It also included four basic science subjects, *viz.* Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. The professional subjects were initially taught by Dr. U. Nabindra, Dr. J.M. Bujarbarua, Dr. D.L. Pal, Dr. Gadadhar Roychoudhury, Dr. Purna Chandra Pathak and Dr. Rabindra Nath Hazarika, while the basic science courses were taught by Iwar Chandra Bhuyan, Devi Charan Mahanta, Dr. Hemen Gohain and Dr. Bhabendra Nath Thakuria.

In the year 1950, the college faced an acute financial crisis and for administrative convenience, it was shifted to the premises of the Directorate of Veterinary Services, Government of Assam at Chenikuthi, Guwahati and the duration of the diploma course was extended to four years. The eligibility for admission into the course was also fixed as Intermediate in Science (I.Sc.). In 1951, the college was affiliated to the Gauhati University and the B.V.Sc. A.H. (Bachelor of Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry) degree programme was started. However, as there was no separate Veterinary Faculty under the university at that time, the college was placed under the Agriculture Faculty. Dr. Sarat Chandra Talukdar, who later became the Dean of the faculty, came out successfully as the first B.V.Sc. graduate of the college in the year 1955. Next year, the degree was awarded to Dr. Gunindra Kumar Roychoudhury, Dr. Paramananda Das and Dr. Jagadananda Pathak. While Dr. Roychoudhury later became the Dean of the faculty,

Director of Postgraduate Studies and the acting Vice-Chancellor of Assam Agricultural University, Dr. Paramananda Das retired as the Director of Research (Veterinary).

On 20th August, 1959 the foundation stone of the present administrative building of the college was laid by the then Chief Minister of Assam Late Bimala Prasad Chaliha. The college was finally shifted to the present location at Khanapara, Guwahati in the year 1960. In the same year two new subjects Pharmacology and Parasitology were also included in the course curriculum. The duration of the B.V.Sc. A.H. course was extended to 5 years from 1961. Due to the persistent efforts of stalwart of the profession Dr. J.M. Bujarbaruah a separate Veterinary Faculty was created under the Gauhati University in the year 1965 and Dr. Bujarbaruah became the first Dean of the faculty.

The increased realization of the importance of the veterinary profession coupled with the man power need to handle the veterinary and animal husbandry activities of the region was the driving force in the growth and development of this institution that was to follow in the coming decades. Since then the institute has grown leaps and bound in the past. Subsequently, with the establishment of the Assam Agricultural University on 1st April, 1969, the then *Assam Veterinary College* along with its physical facilities and manpower was transferred to the Assam Agricultural University and it was renamed as the College of Veterinary Science. The Assam Agricultural University changed the entire academic system of the college and entrusted it with three mandates, *viz.* teaching, research and extension. The college under the Assam Agricultural University introduced Trimester System of education and the intake capacity to B.V.Sc. & A.H. course was raised from 65 to 90. The college also started Postgraduate courses in five disciplines. The first batch of post-graduates came out successfully in the year 1971. This batch included Dr. Prafulla Chandra Das in Poultry Nutrition, Dr. Lilakanta Baruah in Dairy Husbandry, Dr. Birendra Narayan Chakraborty in Veterinary Physiology, and Dr. Chandi Charan Kalita and Dr. Prasanna Saikia in Veterinary Medicine. In the year 1975, a new horizon in the history of the College of Veterinary Science was opened by admitting girl students in the college for the first time.

In 1977, Semester System of education replaced the Trimester System and in the year 1982, the intake capacity to B.V.Sc. & A.H. course was again increased to 130 from 90, and subsequently to 150 in 1985. Out of the total of 14 departments existing at that stage, 12 departments started Ph.D. degree programme by the year 1985.

During these years, the College of Veterinary Science has grown and developed to achieve excellence in the field of Veterinary Education and Research. Presently, with the creation of four new departments as per the recommendation of the Veterinary Council of India, the college has 18 teaching departments, one teaching Veterinary Clinical Complex under the Directorate of Clinics, one library and a number of instructional as well as research farms. There are also a multipurpose sports complex and a medical unit. The college has a separate Directorate of Research (Vety.) to take care of all outside funded research projects. The Associate Director of Extension Education under the Directorate of Extension of the University is responsible for the transfer of technology to user departments and farmers. The Assoc. Director of Students Welfare under the Directorate of Students Welfare of the University takes care of the welfare

activities of the students including extra curricular activities; placement and advisory system etc.

At present, the intake capacity of students in the undergraduate degree programme is 100. All the 18 departments of the college are also offering postgraduate programmes leading to M.V.Sc. degree. However, Ph.D. degree programme is being offered only in 12 departments so far. The enrolment capacity of each department offering M.V.Sc. and Ph.D. degree programme is 10 and 4, respectively.

After the establishment of the Veterinary Council of India by an act of the Parliament of India in the year 1984, veterinary education in the country achieved a tremendous improvement with incorporation of many new courses as well as a common syllabus throughout the country. Academic Regulations and syllabus as prescribed by the Veterinary Council of India for the B.V.Sc. & A.H. degree programme were adopted by AAU in 1995.

Presently, the college has excellent laboratory facilities with sophisticated instruments in various departments which enable the scientists/teachers and the research scholars of the college to engage themselves in frontier research of fundamental and applied aspects of veterinary science. A Central Instruments Facility has been established in the faculty recently with the generous financial assistance from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The facility was inaugurated by the present Vice-Chancellor Dr. S.S. Baghel on 23rd September, 2008.

Under the Directorate of Clinics, a full-fledged Teaching Veterinary Clinics has been functioning in the college for imparting practical training to the students in different clinical and para-clinical disciplines in conformity with the Veterinary Council of India recommendations. The Clinics has outdoor and indoor facilities for treatment of ailing animals, operation theatres, artificial insemination unit, pathological, microbiological, biochemical and parasitological diagnostic facilities, facilities for vaccination of livestock and poultry against various infectious diseases, animal rescue home, and a modern disease diagnostic laboratory for wildlife.

Under the Dean's establishment, the college also has an ARIS (Agricultural Research Information System) Cell, which provides the teachers and the students an easy access to information through 24-hr Internet connectivity. Under the All the departments and establishments of the faculty are now connected through optic fibre network of the Faculty LAN. A Bioinformatics Infrastructure Facility (BIF) has also been established in the faculty in the year 2006 under the Biotechnology Information System Network (BTISnet) programme of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Govt. of India. The BIF provides adequate facilities and guidance to the students and the faculty members in respect of online and offline biological databases, bioinformatics tools and software for undertaking research works in the field of biotechnology and bioinformatics. It also periodically organizes training programmes for teachers and researchers of the country on various aspects of bioinformatics and molecular biology. The National Bureau of Animal

Genetic Resources, ICAR has also recently sanctioned a Core Laboratory for genetic characterization of livestock biodiversity of the North-East.

It is also noteworthy that the Veterinary Council of India had recently selected this college as one of the ten centres in the country selected for conducting continued veterinary education programmes for the field veterinarians. Two such programmes have already been successfully completed during the previous year.

With excellent infrastructure facilities and highly qualified faculty members, the college has made significant contributions in the field of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary education and research in the country in general and the North-Eastern region in particular. During the last three years, the college has witnessed remarkable changes in its infrastructure facilities with liberal financial support from the ICAR at the initiative of the present Vice-Chancellor.

Two experiential learning schemes have also been introduced recently with the financial support of ICAR to provide hands-on training to educated youths and entrepreneurs for self-employment through animal husbandry. Three certificate courses on different aspects of livestock breeding and management have also been proposed to be launched soon.

During the last six decades of its existence, the college has been striving hard to fulfill the manpower needs in the animal husbandry and veterinary sector not only of the state but also of the entire north-eastern region of the country. It has also contributed tremendously towards solving the problems of the rural farmers in respect of animal health care and raising the productivity of livestock and poultry, and thereby improving the socio-economic condition of the rural mass.