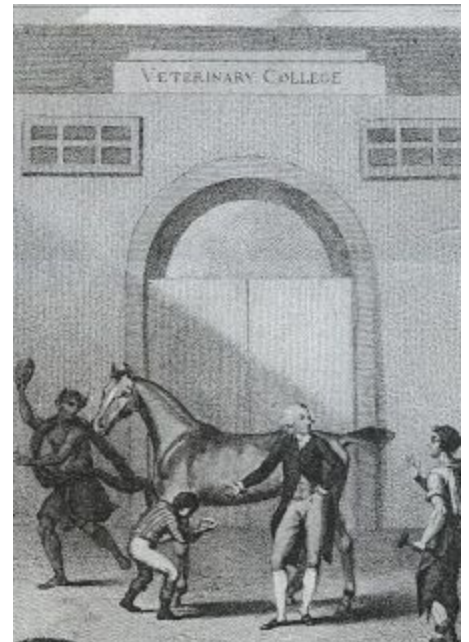


Veterinarians in the 1800s

A veterinarian is a person who treats diseased or injured animals. Sometimes they are called animal doctors.

In the 1800s, Americans were travelling west. People built homes and started farms. These farms nearly always involved raising animals. The farmers used these animals for many things including working the land and for eating. The animals on that farmers raised included oxen, pigs, horses, sheep, and birds like ducks, geese, and turkeys.

Because of this, there was a demand for veterinarians. The farmers needed someone who knew how to treat animals that were sick. Sometimes many animals of one kind would get sick. This was called an animal plague. A veterinarian would treat animals that were sick, and help the farmer prevent the disease from spreading.



One animal that farmers used was the horse. Veterinarians often treated horses for lameness, which meant they were unable to walk correctly. The veterinarian would travel to the farm on which the horse worked, and use his knowledge to treat the injured animal.

Veterinarians were also responsible for taking care of the horse's teeth, as well as trimming their hooves. Dr. J. Robert Curtis of Portage, Wisconsin said,

Taking care of horses' teeth was a regular task. Horse teeth continue to grow, different from humans. Thus, "floating" [smoothing the teeth with a file] was a common task. Sometimes a horse's tooth had to be pulled. Often teeth must be cut. That was probably one of the most common things we did.

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