

Cultural Traffic and the Making of New Zealand's Veterinary Profession, 1880s–1960s

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Abstract

The idea of cultural traffic is used here to deconstruct the story of veterinary professional development in one country: New Zealand. Such analysis elucidates less obvious, less foregrounded elements that have not been integrated into the main narrative of veterinary occupational change. The present assessment reconsiders previously documented instances of cultural traffic across national borders. Although the focus is primarily on veterinary traffic between New Zealand and Australia, this analysis points to broader mobilities of people, practices, and ideas. The study adds to contemporary critique of nation-centric “nation-building” modernisation narratives.

Introduction

This article addresses the intersections between universalising, modernising narratives about imperial networks of professional groups. It presents a local account of an individual profession, using the example of veterinary professional development in New Zealand. A series of events in the period between the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century will be examined. The links between local and global changes in veterinary professionalisation will be teased out; first by applying the idea of cultural traffic to the development of New Zealand's veterinary profession, and second by discussing the cultural context within which such events were situated. It is within such local narratives that specific New Zealand formations have been created and naturalised, subsequently appearing as obvious and inevitable. In the end, neither local nor globalising accounts are sufficient in themselves to give a complete picture of veterinary professionalisation in New Zealand.

The conceptual tension between “local” and “global” developed as modernisation and colonial networks expanded, beginning well before the twentieth century. This suggests caution in being too “contemporary” in analyses of what is occurring today in the development of global society. The tendency among accounts of globalisation in the 1990s to project outwards the experience of the global centres¹ is one example of how metropolitan centres can misread “the antinomies of globalisation theory.”² Learning from the convergences and dialectics of the past may help us to theorise new societal forms and patterns. Sometimes this can be done only after time has elapsed, as further events unfold and challenge previous expectations and interpretations.

The present contribution supports the revision of twentieth-century national historical framing around “making the nation” exemplified by Keith Sinclair and others.³ In starting from a sociological review of veterinary evidence, this too supports the reframing of New Zealand's history within imperial and global networks as seen in the *New Oxford History of New Zealand*⁴ and *Webs of Empire*, where arguments for considering both local and global networks are made. Tony Ballantyne uses the concepts of “trans-national” history and “webs of empire,” where the webs are not only between empire and colony, centre and periphery but are also polycentric.⁵

Julian Go and George Steinmetz have recently reinvestigated the substantial presence of empire in the focus of social science a century ago.⁶ Their work has shown that this early-twentieth-

century attention to cross-national and colony-empire networks was largely erased by the nation-centric focus of subsequent decades. Explaining this suppression as the hegemonic influence of the “American Century” increasingly incorporates the challenge of naturalised western-centric conceptions of modernisation. Such reframing assists the academic study of contemporary global shifts and changing interests as cultural and civilisational long-term changes.⁷ These authors’ reinspection of historical documents in the sociological discipline affirms the breadth of this western modernisation hegemony within the academy as well as society more generally.

This article applies this revisionist perspective to the specific context of veterinary professional development. My recent cross-national analysis of veterinary development in former English-speaking British colonies re-examined previously collected data and identified a variety of interactions and network effects in the development of veterinary professional work around the world.⁸ The present study applies that network logic using the term “traffic” to discuss New Zealand’s internal veterinary profession narrative. The linear modernisation narrative of progressive application of science to animal health shades into more complex interactive processes.⁹ The metropolitan-periphery relationship of the former British Empire and “Anglo-sphere” serves as one tool in this reframing.¹⁰ Here, my intention is not to reinspect the influence of these networks but rather to assess their utility in disrupting the internal coherence of an individual national account. Analysing the relationships between apparently incidental events creates a more complex narrative of professional development.¹¹

Renewed interest in imperial processes and geopolitical webs beyond dominant western modernisation is reflected in the work of other social theorists such as Peter Wagner, who asserts the contingent nature of multiple modernisations.¹² As for Wagner’s global contention, in the specific case of veterinary professionalisation in New Zealand it is not the empirical data that changes; rather, new insights and relationships in gathering and interpreting that data are accrued. Within this multi-polar framing, applying the antipodean perspective of Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan at various points suggests new lines of inquiry.¹³ Here it is the revised salience (and hence revised explanation) of why and how historical events and processes came about that allows a different, multi-threaded professionalisation narrative to emerge. Previous seemingly coherent explanations benefit from new framing to make sense of porous national boundaries in the historical evidence. Fragmentary pieces of professional history, and sometimes important observations made *en passant*, become more relevant than they were in the context of individual accounts of national professionalisation, and sometimes even pivotal.

It is not simply professionals’ own accounts that have tended to offer nationally discrete and coherent narratives of professional development. Veterinary historians’ own accounts relevant to the present discussion include those of Bert W. Bierer, J. Fred Smithcors, Alan D. M. G. Laing, Iain Pattison, and Eric Shortridge, Catherine Smith, and Earle Gardner.¹⁴ Sociological accounts of professions in general, prior to those of Terence J. Johnson and Eliot Freidson in the early 1970s,¹⁵ also invoked meta-narratives that more recent theorising associates with unreflective modernity—linear, coherent, sequential, self-contained, inadequately gendered, and ethnically blinkered. Historical sociology today standardly critiques these accounts for their short-term, functionalist, and western-centric assumptions.¹⁶ Alexander M. Carr-Saunders and Peter A. Wilson’s historiographically useful volume of 1934 is one example.¹⁷ Harold L. Wilensky’s 1964 account of professionalisation stages is perhaps the most famous of such functionalist articulations, though others follow similar logic.¹⁸

I have noted elsewhere the inability of sociological commentators like Ronald M. Pavalko to make the shift and rethink their theories despite the scholarship of Freidson and Johnson and other social science shifts in the later twentieth century.¹⁹ Thus, the coherent national veterinary narrative I am challenging here is not just a “straw person.” Scholars writing about their own professional fields and academic sociologists both largely rely on chronological sequence as the explanatory engine for describing professional development. Chronological sequences in themselves provide useful strategies to organise historical material, but it remains important to reflect on the setting within which such accounts highlight or prioritise events and interpret changes. The commitment to reinspect earlier inquiries documenting veterinary professionalisation and its associated professionalism discourses is a commitment to being open to confirming, modifying, or departing from previous interpretations of what happened.

Cultural Traffic

The idea of cultural traffic provides a convenient tool to examine veterinary development. John G. A. Pocock’s historical framing of New Zealand as islands suggests the inevitability of movement and traffic between places, whether imperial networks or otherwise.²⁰ This corresponds to the use of cultural traffic within Beilharz and Hogan’s socio-historical antipodean perspective: “What, first, do we mean by cultural traffic? Cultural traffic is an idea that itself moves. We borrow it from scholars like the anthropologist, Nicholas Thomas. . . . Cultural traffic refers to the idea that culture is constituted by movement; it does not come out of the ground, or out of the particularity of place, so much as it results from traffic or movement between places.”²¹

For Beilharz and Hogan, culture is always in a process of becoming, blending into something new. It is acutely felt, even if not fully perceived, in contemporary society’s global movement of goods, media, popular culture, and people. Movement and mobility may not be apparent in the short term if culture expressed in legislation and institutional arrangements looms large. But the influx of difference, or intended change, over time involves the constancy of mobility, travel, and transfer. Cultural traffic may consist of movement of any combination of people, ideas, and practices. The idea of cultural traffic is a way of posing intersections of cultures and societies that in other scholarship reappears in the language of hybridity or cultural fusion.²²

Thus, when Beilharz and Hogan observe that “Australia, indeed, was constituted by cultural traffic, even as it was by the power of British imperialism,”²³ these two elements are not either/or but simply alternate modes of expressing what the relationship meant in constructing Australian society, Beilharz and Hogan’s initial point of reference.²⁴ Something similar can be said of other colonial-settler societies like New Zealand. These authors synthesise cultural traffic into their antipodean sociology as they continue elaborating their thinking using the themes of “time, place, and division.”²⁵ The present article applies Beilharz and Hogan’s deployment of cultural traffic to a specific empirical use. The idea of cultural traffic contrasts—and at points contradicts—the idea of “global south,”²⁶ in which powerful global northern centres dominate and exclude the imagined south.

Much more is going on, however. First, understanding a reverse cultural traffic flow is important, notwithstanding contentions about geoglobal domination. The argument here is that the global centres know themselves and learn about themselves through their relation to the peripheries, here meaning the antipodean south but also more generally. Émile Durkheim’s *Elementary Rules* (1912) is a classic sociological instance of this Europe-antipodes connection.²⁷ Second, and even more innovatively, Beilharz and Hogan apply cultural traffic

beyond the long-traversed centre-periphery binaries to discern edge-edge (periphery-periphery) conversations and movement of ideas. In this study, Australia and New Zealand are nominally First World but geographically and geopolitically they are edge-edge countries. This provides a much more nuanced picture of cross-national interactions and relationships without denying the webs of empire. Nicolas Thomas' notion of "entangled objects" supports this challenge to the presumed but false clarity of binarised western/modern difference over against other cultural and national creation processes.²⁸

Beilharz and Hogan observe: "Relocating, moving, shifting, displacing—this is how culture works. . . . To relocate is a fundamental part of the modern human condition, whether voluntary or compulsory, free or forced. Modernity is based on movement, migration, immigration, expulsion, travel, exile."²⁹ The point is not for either New Zealand or Australia to make exceptionalist claims to such socio-historical processes. This is almost invariably poor history and poor social theory. Cultural traffic is about crossing boundaries in remaking new combinations of cultures and societies from previous iterations of them and exogenous influences. This is the case not simply at the societal level but also at middle levels such as Durkheim described, for example, in conceiving modern professions as middle-order integrative social institutions between family and state.³⁰

Veterinary Cultural Traffic Across the Tasman Sea

Many components of New Zealand's national veterinary history relate primarily to Australia. Reviewing events and changes in New Zealand's veterinary professionalisation identifies and integrates events, movements, and flows of people and ideas from New Zealand's internal veterinary history and beyond. It becomes apparent that there is no autochthonous history and that Australia and New Zealand are intertwined antipodean entities.³¹

The umbrella of British imperial activity is one key to unlocking significant interconnections between this New Zealand professionalisation story and events beyond the country's shores.³² As argued in the previous section, however, the idea of cultural traffic invokes more than just centre-periphery or metropole-colony relationships from modernisation perspectives. It also involves edge-edge relationships and the movement or traffic of ideas, personnel, and practices along these axes.³³ Some of these edge-edge movements and events travel back and reconstitute the centres. In the present discussion, the focus is on Trans-Tasman cultural traffic.

This approach challenges a singular internal narrative of events and politics in New Zealand, arguing that it is insufficient to explain the development of the New Zealand veterinary profession. Reliance on an originary account that the profession emerged with European settler colonisation is problematised by the very words "European," "settler," and "colonisation."³⁴ Each term makes assumptions about the generative source and the modes of cultural travel and reception that successive scholars have challenged and revised. The two most substantial accounts of New Zealand veterinary development are my own 1979 Master's thesis and the *Brief History* of professional veterinarians Shortridge, Smith, and Gardner.³⁵ The former takes a sociological view of contested positions (farmers, veterinarians, politicians, regionalists, and tertiary institutions) in a broad overview of national veterinary history. The latter draws together practitioners' recollections and information from within the veterinary profession, conscious that with the passage of time many valuable and interesting personal accounts of professional veterinary work disappear.

Cultural Traffic in New Zealand’s Veterinary Professionalisation

The following list itemises seven periods in the entangled development of Australian involvement in the New Zealand veterinary profession’s story over almost a century, between the 1880s and the 1960s. Other strands further complicating the narrative are cultural flows between North America and New Zealand, and from Europe and the United Kingdom.

- Australasian Veterinary Medical Association, 1880s–90s.
- Chief Veterinarian J. A. Gilruth Exits New Zealand to Australia, 1904–8.
- “The Colonial Horse Doctor,” 1901–6.
- New Zealand Veterinary Association and the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1920s.
- One-off Australian Bursaries, 1930s.
- Dominion Federation of Farmers’ Veterinary Services, 1942–3.
- Veterinary Club System, 1946–60s.

Each of these periods is considered briefly, both to document evidence of the flow of ideas, personnel, and practices into the country and to modify our received understanding of New Zealand’s veterinary history.

Australasian Veterinary Medical Association, 1880s–90s

The Australasian Veterinary Medical Association was set up in 1880 in Melbourne, and briefly ran a journal until 1882. It was led by William T. Kendall MRCVS, who proposed, amongst other things, an Intercolonial Veterinary Conference and who was active on many legislative matters concerning animals and farming.³⁶ This association had a New Zealand secretary, Charles A. Calvert, also a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS). The association attempted to network qualified veterinarians across the antipodean British settler colonies, with the purpose of distinguishing themselves from untrained animal practitioners. Members were “veterinary surgeons” trained by one of the British veterinary schools and accredited by the British uni-portal accreditation system awarding membership of the MRCVS.³⁷

It was at this time that legislation restricting professional practice in veterinary work,³⁸ as well as in professions like dentistry and medicine, was enacted not only in New Zealand but also in North America and other British colonies.³⁹ Internationally, veterinary schools are generally Schools or Colleges of Veterinary Medicine. Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa use the term “School of Veterinary Science” (though interestingly, in Australian schools where the veterinary degree is a graduate degree and received after gaining a “named BSc,” the qualification is now “Doctor of Veterinary Medicine”). In the nineteenth century, several professions used educational qualifications to vilify untrained practitioners as “quacks.”⁴⁰ Another part of the contested occupational closure process were gender discourses marginalising women.⁴¹ Competition between MRCVS groups and veterinary practitioner associations in Victoria, Australia, continued in the final decades of the nineteenth century, these disputes leading to “the breakup of the [Australasian Trans-Tasman] Association and the discontinuance of the journal.”⁴²

This was significant at a time when regulations about who could practice did not yet exist but were in the process of being proposed and negotiated. In the same period, therapies and drugs were matters of commerce rather than regulatory approval. The terms “Australian colonies” and “Australasian” were used interchangeably, and committee members of this early association were all MRCVS qualified and accredited. This nascent professional association

represented New Zealand and all Australian colonies/states except Western Australia and the Northern Territory. It claimed as members qualified veterinary surgeons resident in all states. Given colonial amalgamation in the Federation of Australia on 1 January 1901, and the apparent likelihood of New Zealand's inclusion in the new commonwealth,⁴³ this coverage discounts Miles Fairburn's arguments of New Zealand exceptionalism or autochthonous culture.⁴⁴

The new association's report to the 1881 British National Veterinary Congress reflected the group's effort to represent progressive veterinary science while playing catch up to "the home counties" of England.⁴⁵ The association's primary object was to gain recognition for veterinary expertise in colonial animal disease outbreaks, thereby ousting medical- and non-veterinary-trained inspectorial personnel functioning in what they viewed as their occupational space. The report notes two explanations for veterinarians having "never been fully appreciated in the Australian colonies": first, the lack of understanding among farmers and the low availability of veterinarians involved in normal farm management; second, "stock inspectors" not previously identified as animal experts coming to be seen publicly as able to perform animal health functions.

In this period in the late nineteenth century, political moves to combine all the colonies of Australia and New Zealand grew stronger. While emigrating from the United Kingdom to New Zealand in 1880, William T. Kendall stopped at Melbourne and permanently located there. He was instrumental in setting up the Veterinary Association and became its secretary. The cross-colony veterinary ambitions of Kendall throughout the Australian colonies and New Zealand, of which Calvert's role was a part, eventually played out differently on each side of the Tasman. In 1890, Sir John Hall (New Zealand Premier, 1879–82) pushed back against what then seemed to be the "obviousness" of Australasian federation, objecting to a 1200-mile distance and a far-away government. In the end, when the colonies and territories of the Australian continent federated, the New Zealand colony did not join. The data reminds us that, notwithstanding modern national attachments, this was a multi-colony process, not a two-nation process.⁴⁶

As Ron Palenski points out, inter-colony traffic across the Tasman Sea between the Australasian colonies had been continual since before the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. For example, Richard Seddon (New Zealand Prime Minister, 1893–1906) "arrived in New Zealand from Lancashire via the Victorian goldfields, as had many other adoptive New Zealanders." An example of traffic in the other direction across the Tasman at this time was the "president of the Australian Natives Association, James Newton Haxton Hume Cook . . . a New Zealander, born in south Waikato, who moved to Melbourne with his parents when he was fifteen."⁴⁷

Individuals such as Kendall, today considered the "father" of Australian veterinary science, were central to veterinary occupational organising.⁴⁸ The Australasian Veterinary Medical Association wanted a register of qualified veterinarians. Though Kendall believed there were at that time less than "a dozen qualified veterinarians in Australia,"⁴⁹ the association managed to gather about twenty members across Australia and New Zealand. A significant example of the fluidity of colonial boundaries and relocations can be seen in Harold E. Albiston's observation that "Kendall arrived in Melbourne . . . a city with only four veterinary surgeons" in 1880.⁵⁰ Kendall established a practice at Port Melbourne and set up a training college called the Melbourne Veterinary College which was "absorbed into the University of Melbourne in 1908" when the university established its new Veterinary School.⁵¹

Chief Veterinarian J. A. Gilruth Exits New Zealand to Australia, 1904–8

Kendall's planned New Zealand destination, and his switch to an Australian location in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, illustrates emergent wider inter-colonial networks. Kendall's role contrasts with that of John A. Gilruth, the corresponding giant personality in New Zealand veterinary development at the turn of the century. Gilruth came to New Zealand in 1892 and, though he ultimately went to Australia, was instrumental in major veterinary developments in New Zealand.

According to Alan Powell, Gilruth joined New Zealand's newly created government Department of Agriculture in 1893, investigating stock disease nationally along with John F. Maclean, another MRCVS veterinarian already in New Zealand. Gilruth was given leave to study bacteriology at the Pasteur Institute, Paris, in 1896 and "in 1897 he became chief veterinarian and government bacteriologist," actively promoting new research facilities and "upgrading standards of meat inspection and slaughtering."⁵² He recruited dozens of MRCVS-qualified United Kingdom veterinarians for government service in the new and rapidly expanding New Zealand Department of Lands and Survey meat inspection service within the Veterinary Division.⁵³ This strategy was the fulfilment in New Zealand of a similar concern of Kendall since the early 1880s in the Australian colonies. Gilruth played key roles in public health improvements and was central to the first attempt to set up a national veterinary school at the University of Otago in Dunedin.⁵⁴

Gilruth's activity and success raised a cultural traffic issue involving another antipodean settler society, South Africa, again reflecting networks of commerce, culture, and personnel mobilised through the colonial-imperial networks of the British Empire.⁵⁵ Tony Nightingale describes the situation in which Gilruth "grew increasingly frustrated with his political masters in New Zealand": "In 1904 the premier had failed to pass on an offer from the imperial government for a position as Chief Veterinary Officer in Transvaal, South Africa, at twice his New Zealand salary. He discovered the default upon his return [from Europe] in 1907. This, coupled with the government's reluctance to establish a fully funded animal research facility, led him to seek prospects elsewhere. In 1908 Gilruth resigned to become the first professor and director at the University of Melbourne Veterinary School."⁵⁶

The realities of occupational change and the economics of farming meant that the Australian Melbourne Veterinary School, for several decades into the twentieth century, proved barely any more viable than Gilruth's Otago veterinary school initiative. Such traffic of policy, personnel, and veterinary practice across the Tasman became substantively intertwined during the mid-decades of the twentieth century, particularly in the area of veterinary education.⁵⁷

"The Colonial Horse Doctor," 1901–6

The figure of Alexander M. Paterson MRCVS epitomises Trans-Tasman veterinary cultural traffic—even more so than politically important figures like Kendall and Gilruth. Paterson's veterinary work, though partly associated with government, national policy, and hygiene legislation, also articulated commercial and personal trajectories of activity and geographic movement. He invokes the rubrics of professionalism and specialist care in the introduction to his slim book *The Colonial Horse Doctor* (1906), which demonstrates this kind of practitioner expertise.⁵⁸ The movement of MRCVS-qualified veterinarians as a kind of cultural good, and the changed relevance as veterinarians moved across regions and national boundaries, shows the capacity of the idea of cultural traffic to reconfigure putatively straightforward narratives of modernisation. It is imperial domination, not science, which is the primary carrier of the

cultural artefact of professional qualification, and which made MRCVS accreditation salient in a new national context.

Paterson moved a number of times—reflecting the themes of relocation and mobility in the cultural traffic concept. First, he shifted from the United Kingdom to the new government Veterinary Division that Gilruth had established in New Zealand in the mid-1890s and through which he had aggressively recruited overseas qualified veterinarians like Paterson. After a relatively short time, Paterson decided to leave the government's Veterinary Division; he also left a very disappointed Gilruth.⁵⁹ Referencing Paterson's departure, Gilruth publicly aired this problem of MRCVS staff churn from government into private sector work at length in his Annual Report for the New Zealand Department of Lands and Survey:

The loss of Mr Paterson to the Department is distinctly to be deplored, even though there is some satisfaction in the knowledge that his skill is still available for a section of the agricultural community, and that he has expressed himself as desirous of aiding the Department in its work as far as possible. Yet it should be remembered that now the first duty of Mr Paterson and those holding similar appointments, is not to the general public, but to that section of which he is a special advisor, and circumstances might arise which compel his ability and skill being directed in the interests of the few even to the detriment of the many. That Farmers' Associations should have their own officers, so far as possible, seems wise, and a policy to be commended. But it is equally certain that a better scheme for the colony than the one adopted would be for the Department to detach an officer for the special duty of attending to the members of such associations who cared to pay a stipulated annual sum, the general control of that officer, particularly in matters relating to contagious disease, remaining with the Department. As it is not every individual who is fitted to undertake these duties, better remuneration would require to be offered than at present given by the State.⁶⁰

Gilruth's comments throw light on contemporary thinking about the employment of veterinarians by "stock-owners." The cross-pressures of scarce job opportunities and the need to earn a living for farmers, settlers, professional veterinarians, labourers, new migrants, and others were much wider than Paterson's case—even enveloping Gilruth himself as noted above.

Paterson moved to work in the lower South Island of New Zealand for the Southland Farmers' Union, this part of the countryside increasingly populated by the influx of European settlers. He changed his role from national hygiene and food safety veterinary activity to work for one Farmers' Union service.⁶¹ Even that, however, was not for too long. Paterson's book, *The Colonial Horse Doctor*, follows a self-help "how to" genre of settler-remedies texts that interestingly prefigures several modern foci in animal care.⁶² The medical appellation "doctor" is worth noting as part of this popular rural discourse. Professional distinctions and titles, sometimes related to social class, between doctors, dentists, and veterinarians, and certainly in this early professionalising era, were used to distinguish qualified and unqualified practitioners.⁶³ For the present exploration of inter-country veterinary traffic, it can be observed that his book was published in Invercargill (the southernmost urban centre in New Zealand) with New Zealand advertisements at the back, and, in the same year, in Melbourne with Victorian advertisements relevant to an Australian readership. Paterson's subsequent career has not been fully traced, but he appears to have continued to move, travelling north from Victoria and settling on the Australian eastern seaboard.

New Zealand Veterinary Association and the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1920s

The formation of a New Zealand Veterinary Association may have been delayed by the professional activity in the Australian states. Certainly, other examples of the traffic of people and ideas from countries and places outside New Zealand were influential in this process of forming an association. Important examples include H. L. Marsack and H. S. S. (Bert) Kyle, graduates of Ontario, Canada (1891) and Melbourne, Australia (1895) veterinary schools respectively. Gilruth recruited them into government service in 1901 as part of the new scientific and governmental attention to animal and human health and food hygiene concerns.⁶⁴ The following year, Gilruth listed them by name in his Annual Report, distinguishing his staff by MRCVS qualification as “veterinarians,” “veterinarians and meat inspectors,” and “meat inspectors,” placing Marsack and Kyle in the last of these groups.⁶⁵ Kyle later became a Member of the New Zealand Parliament and was central to the passage of the 1926 Veterinary Surgeons Act.⁶⁶

In the same period, this occupational momentum of qualified veterinary surgeons coming into the New Zealand colony enabled the formation of the New Zealand Veterinary Association in 1923.⁶⁷ This new association immediately lobbied for the proposed Veterinary Surgeons Act. When passed, the Act restricted legal rights to the title “veterinary surgeon” to qualified individuals approved by a new National Veterinary Surgeons’ Board. A sunset clause was created for active veterinary practitioners without academic qualifications; forty-eight individuals were registered on this supplementary list. Auckland “veterinary practitioner” Pearl Dawson (like Marsack, with a diploma qualification from Ontario) was placed on this list, again illustrating the process of inter-colonial cultural traffic.⁶⁸

The Trans-Tasman traffic influences on New Zealand veterinary professionalisation reflected a strategic Australian contribution to the formation of the national association. In January 1923, the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (some members of which were veterinarians) met in Wellington. At a post-conference meeting of veterinarians, “Twenty-six veterinarians were present including Professor H. A. Woodruff, President of the Australian Veterinary Association, who chaired the meeting. It was unanimously decided to form the New Zealand Veterinary Association, subscription to be one guinea.” Dr C. J. Reakes was elected President, A. M. Brodie Vice-president, and W. T. Collins Secretary and Treasurer. Membership was open to all qualified veterinarians but was not statutory in the way that membership of the New Zealand Law Society, for instance, is required to be able to practise as a solicitor.⁶⁹

An earlier attempt to form a national association prior to World War I had not been successful and was delayed until 1921, although there had been veterinary congresses since 1907.⁷⁰ However, by 1923, the repeated Trans-Tasman meetings of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science and other conferences, and Woodruff’s presence as President of the Australian Veterinary Association, also influenced the decision to form an association. The New Zealand Veterinary Association was established at a much later date than its Australian counterpart. Further development of animal, farming, and public health policy followed from this traffic of people and ideas across the Tasman Sea.

One-off Australian Bursaries, 1930s

In 1928, the agriculturalist and veterinarian Andy Leslie emigrated from Scotland to New Zealand’s South Island, taking up a lecturing position at Christchurch Agricultural College. There, he provided continuing education to farmers in the region; he also established a veterinary practice.⁷¹ Leslie encouraged several of his agriculture students to become

veterinarians and lobbied central government in Wellington for bursaries for them. This meant studying in Australia, since New Zealand did not have a veterinary school. After completing their training in Sydney, these graduates returned to New Zealand to veterinary clinical practice, several of them eventually becoming doyens of the profession in New Zealand.⁷² Then, following his own recommendations, in the mid-1930s Leslie himself travelled to Australia and completed a one-year course at the Sydney Veterinary School, though the level or field of specialisation is unknown. He then came back to New Zealand's North Island dairying district of Taranaki where he applied his extensive expertise, veterinary knowledge, and renowned enthusiasm, convincing farmers to establish veterinary organisations via subscriptions paid through their local milk-processing dairy companies.

Leslie's demonstrated effectiveness in showing farmers how dairy herd illnesses and fatalities could be significantly reduced quickly led to more "veterinary clubs," as they were called, being set up.⁷³ These were farmer operated and controlled, and commonly (though not always) associated with the local dairy company.⁷⁴ Economic gains from veterinary attention in sheep districts were not as great or immediately apparent.⁷⁵ Accessing Australian veterinary training and qualifications proved an effective pathway to achieving improved farm veterinary services in New Zealand. Enlisting central government to provide bursaries for individual trainees in Australia presumed the national importance of agriculture to the New Zealand economy and required a unified voice, as did placing graduates into formal veterinary service groups established by local farmers.

Dominion Federation of Farmers' Veterinary Services, 1942–43

As the number of rural veterinary practices grew during World War II, competition for the few veterinarians available became intense between the farmer-controlled clubs. Many groups were unable to obtain veterinarians even though local farming communities had established a veterinary club and were ready to commence. In the middle of the war, Leslie and the three main farming industry organisations formed a national organisation to manage the growth of clinical veterinary services across New Zealand farming districts, based on the report of the government and industry Veterinary Services Committee.⁷⁶ The primary focus of the new Dominion Federation of Farmers' Veterinary Services was securing veterinarians from overseas.

The Federation's work included obtaining more bursaries for students to study in Sydney and, after graduation, return to bonded veterinary club practice in New Zealand. This provides a clear example of continuing traffic circulating personnel and veterinary ideas across the Tasman.⁷⁷ During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Australian state of Tasmania had also established a parallel series of clinical rural animal practices with government agricultural service officers. With some features in common with New Zealand's Veterinary Club system, it was also addressing rural client need. Further afield, there were similarities to the continental European pattern of professional development including veterinarians serving as government officials,⁷⁸ which Gilruth's statement upon Paterson's leaving government service had shown earlier. Thus, the veterinary shortage in Tasmania, like that in New Zealand, led to a government programme to address the lack of organised paying demand for clinical rural veterinary services. This characteristic of the early decades of Anglo-settler farming in the twentieth century on both sides of the Tasman took a new turn in the veterinary club movement with a strong agriculture sector and continuing government involvement in the procurement of professional expertise.⁷⁹

The Veterinary Club System, 1946–60s

In the end, the veterinary trainees produced by this bursary system were so effective in reducing animal losses and improving farm productivity and profitability that demand increased beyond the capacity of the system. Many other things were developing around veterinary and animal care post-World War II, but for the present argument the 1946 transformation of the Federation into a new Veterinary Services Council (VSC) was pivotal in accelerating the Trans-Tasman traffic of trainee veterinarians returning to New Zealand. These students travelled back from Sydney to summer internships in New Zealand each year, and on graduating from Australian veterinary schools were employed in one of the new veterinary clubs.⁸⁰ While supply continued to grow in the post-World War II period, demand grew even faster. Over time, a network of scores of local clubs provided national coverage of rural veterinarians for the farming sector. When the Sydney Veterinary School reached capacity, New Zealand students were re-routed to the recently re-established Queensland Veterinary School.⁸¹

In the 1950s, a sustained Trans-Tasman dialogue opened up between the New Zealand VSC, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, and the Australian veterinary schools. Farmer control of veterinary clubs irritated many veterinarians in the fast-professionalising occupation, and the steady attrition into other forms of veterinary work meant that staff shortages at veterinary clubs remained high. The Australian schools accommodated New Zealand students at first since this helped them meet establishment overheads by filling each year's allocation of student places. Over time, however, increased numbers of students applying from the various Australian states strengthened calls for New Zealand to "get its act together" and open its own veterinary school.⁸²

Regional rivalry within New Zealand nullified attempts for some years to obtain government funding. Vying between Canterbury and Manawatu agricultural colleges as potential locations was driven by local authorities' lobbying. Additionally, the VSC was split on what annual student intake was needed to establish a school, delaying until 1952 a combined submission to central government. This resulted in the University of New Zealand Senate (representing the four universities and two agricultural colleges) in 1954 recommending a school be established and preferring the Massey Agricultural College.⁸³ Through the 1950s, Australian opposition to taking further New Zealand students became increasingly vocal. Even in the early 1960s, New Zealand had not developed plans for a veterinary school. As exclusion loomed, several compromise extensions for New Zealand students were made by Australian veterinary schools in the late 1950s. Australian schools came under continuing pressure from New Zealand agriculture representatives and government officials repeatedly promising the establishment of a New Zealand veterinary school "soon."

The final refusal of Sydney's Veterinary School to take further New Zealand students changed student traffic across the Tasman.⁸⁴ The effectiveness of the New Zealand VSC from its inception in 1946 in getting government funding framed both the commencement and cessation of cultural traffic of personnel and training across the Tasman. As a farmer-controlled organisation, the VSC had two effects. In the first place, it limited a wider vision of veterinary service possibilities, even though Leslie and other veterinarians had showed this to be possible in the 1930s. More significantly, however, many farmers believed that veterinarians were "their" animal technicians (like the contract sharemilkers of farmer-owned dairy herds) and treated them like farm employees coming onto their property.⁸⁵ But this attempt to control veterinary professionalisation was undercut from the 1960s onwards. With the beginning of a local New Zealand veterinary school producing veterinarians as standard university students

rather than bonded bursars, graduates were no longer obligated to serve in farmers' veterinary clubs and accept clubs' salary control.

The New Zealand Veterinary Faculty opened at Massey University in Palmerston North in 1964.⁸⁶ Over the next five years this drew the curtain down on the Trans-Tasman flow of veterinarians that had lasted for several decades. From a peak of seventy-eight final-year New Zealand trainees in Australia in 1954, the number of twenty final-year students on bursaries in 1965 quickly dropped as the new school developed and Australian bursaries ceased.⁸⁷ The major flow of personnel and practice described here for the veterinary club system makes the cultural traffic argument clearer simply by its volume and national impact.⁸⁸ Yet the importance of cultural traffic may be independent of volume, as seen in the contributions of significant individuals like Kendall and Gilruth discussed earlier. Similarly, a single idea or practice—as exemplified in other fields like popular culture or music—may be just as important in the context of cultural and socio-economic continuation or change.⁸⁹

Conclusion

What is cultural traffic? How does cultural traffic come about? The answers can be very broad. Although at any given moment culture seems fixed, in the longer term (and with the gaze of historical or comparative distance) the mobility and transformation of experiences, perspectives, and practices in new locations is compelling in its disruption of essentialising or exceptionalist narratives. In applying the concept of cultural traffic to veterinary professionalisation in New Zealand, the present focus has been on the relationship between Australia and New Zealand, thus deconstructing the linear coherence of national professional development. Passing references were also made to other Anglo-settler societies and to the imperial flow of veterinarians and veterinary knowledge from the United Kingdom.

Scholars such as Freidson have asked why veterinary medicine/veterinary science and dentistry have become high-level medical professions independent of medicine itself.⁹⁰ In many respects, there are parallels to other fields of medical expertise that continue to exist *within* human medicine. Of these three groups, the veterinary profession is the latest to achieve high occupational status, though this does not directly address the important wider question. The story told here is one instance of how the development of skills and technologies helped this process for veterinarians. But the contingent nature of events and personnel and the flow of training and organisational practices in this specific context is a reminder that, even in something as ubiquitous to modern life as the health sector, professions have socially contingent trajectories of change rather than inevitable historical sequences.

The aim of this article has been to use the idea of cultural traffic as the lens through which to view the development of one national profession as a fluctuating movement of people and practices over time. This analysis has demonstrated the relevance of cultural traffic to the modernisation of occupations and their institutions, beyond more overtly recognisable popular cultural practices like music. Further research may well identify more instances of such traffic or apply similar ideas to other professional groups or institutional forms to see what specific empirical variations have shaped their development. Even on this inspection of existing veterinary professionalisation sequences, the Trans-Tasman antipodean production and circulation of veterinary personnel and expertise offers analytic gains. Applying the lens of cultural traffic challenges existing narratives and increases our understanding of the veterinary profession's complex historical circumstances, both within New Zealand and beyond our shores.

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