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Stephen Hitchner

About the cover

Stephen B. Hitchner
(1916–2011)

Stephen Hitchner was born in 1916 and raised in New Jersey. At Rutgers University, he worked part-time for Dr. Fred Beaudette who steered him toward a career in research on infectious diseases of poultry. He earned the VMD degree in 1943 at the University of Pennsylvania.

After three years in the Army Veterinary Corps, he took an appointment at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. There, he made the seminal discovery of the B-1 strain of Newcastle disease virus which was used worldwide as a vaccine. During the next 10 years, first at the University of Massachusetts and then at American Scientific Laboratories in Wisconsin, he continued his research and vaccine development. In 1960, he and two colleagues established L & M Laboratory, a very successful poultry vaccine company in Maryland which ultimately was purchased by Abbott Laboratories. Steve moved to Cornell University in 1966 as Chair of the Department of Avian Medicine. In addition to administrative duties and teaching, he carried out research on infectious bursal disease, Marek's disease, infectious laryngotracheitis, parrot herpesvirus, canary pox, and other infections. Also, he orchestrated the establishment of a federally licensed biologics production facility at Cornell's Duck Research Laboratory. After relinquishing the department chairmanship in 1976, he continued teaching and research programs for five years, establishing a program in pet and exotic bird medicine. He was an author or co-author of 55 scientific publications.

Consultancies with the Pan American Health Bureau and the USDA, and editorship of the AAAP manual on avian pathogens were other important activities. He served as the 3rd President of the AAAP in 1960–61.