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Dr. Ben Roy Burmester

About the cover

Dr. Ben Roy Burmester, known to his many friends as Ben, had a long and productive career in poultry research on avian tumors and tumor viruses. Ben was born in Petaluma, California on June 13, 1910 to a family where rearing laying chickens was a way of life. He graduated from University of California Berkeley with his B.S. in 1932 and then continued with his graduate program, receiving M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in 1933 and 1936, respectively. After graduation, Ben took a job in 1936 at the University of Illinois, then joined the USDA's Regional Poultry Research Laboratory (RPRL, currently named Avian Disease & Oncology Laboratory) in East Lansing, Michigan in September 1940 as a poultry physiologist. Burmester and his East Lansing team studied avian leukosis and its virus for the next 25 years, contributing significantly to knowledge of its pathology, pathogenesis and epidemiology. His notable achievements included isolation of the causative virus of avian leukosis, demonstration that the virus was commonly transmitted through the egg, and, with others, elucidation of the role of the bursa of Fabricius in the pathogenesis of lymphoid leukosis. Ben enrolled in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State College as a special student, attending classes part time while continuing his employment at the RPRL; he graduated with a DVM in 1951. He became the Laboratory Director in 1964, a position he held until his retirement in 1974. The discovery of the causative virus of Marek's disease in 1967 and a successful vaccine based on the turkey herpesvirus in 1970 were crowning achievements of Ben's career as director. After retirement he contributed to the initial studies (by Jagdev Sharma) on the technique of *in ovo* vaccination for Marek's disease. Ben was a charter member (1957) and the 4th president (1961–1962) of the AAAP. He was also a prominent leader in the World Veterinary Poultry Association, serving as president (1977–1981) and co-chair of the 1977 WVPA meeting in Atlanta, the first to be held in the United States. He was elected a life member of AAAP in 1983. Additional information may be found in a biography posted on the AAAP website.