Obituary – Prof. David S Kronfeld

Prof. David S Kronfeld died Sunday, 17 December 2006, and will be greatly missed for his knowledge and wisdom in the area of equine nutrition as related to health, welfare and performance. David was born on 5 November 1928 in Auckland, New Zealand. He received both his bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Queensland, and subsequently a PhD in comparative physiology from U.C. Berkeley in 1959. In 1972, David received a Doctorate of Science from the University of Queensland based on his research over the prior 20 years. His PhD advisor was Prof. Max Kleiber, author of the noted work The Fire of Life. David was a faculty member at four universities in a career spanning more than 52 years. During that time he published more than 700 papers, including 248 refereed papers and 56 book chapters, and he received a number of awards for his contributions to veterinary medicine and equine science. David was a founding Diplomate of the American Colleges of Veterinary Internal Medicine and Veterinary Nutrition, and also was a founding member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists. During the period 1988–2005, David was the Paul Mellon Distinguished Prof. of Agriculture at Virginia Tech. In this position, he was charged with the development of the newly established Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center as an internationally recognized center for research in equine science, with particular emphasis on the study of the training and nutritional needs of the elite equine athlete.

David’s research and teaching contributed to the advancement of many areas, but in particular he gained international recognition for his work on metabolic diseases of ruminants and, more recently, equine nutrition and exercise physiology. He was one of the first proponents of veterinary clinical nutrition, and was instrumental in the establishment of nutrition support services for hospitalized patients and in graduate training in clinical nutrition. David will be remembered, and missed, for his tremendous mentorship of graduate students. During his career, he mentored more than 40 graduate students and postdoctoral associates. He approached this role with passion and enthusiasm, encouraging his students to develop independent lines of thought and, ultimately, their own area of expertise. Fittingly, in 2006 he was awarded the Alumni Award for Excellence in Graduate Academic Advising at Virginia Tech. David was a critical thinker who advocated a rigorous pursuit of the truth. He often criticized students and his colleagues for their ready acceptance of unproven concepts, and challenged them to evaluate the validity of these concepts through application of valid scientific methods. Indeed, another of David’s legacies was his advocacy for what we now term ‘evidence-based medicine’.

On a personal note, we are both very grateful for David’s friendship, support and mentorship. We miss him greatly.

Ray Geor
Pat Harris

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