

# Regional vet school awaits states' okay

By Mary Jo Pitzl

Plans for a veterinary science school in Lincoln which would serve surrounding states are pending approval from the legislatures of the five states of the Old West Regional Commission.

"Action on this issue has been dormant since last spring," said Prof. Marvin Twichaus, chairman of the Veterinary Science Dept. Twichaus also is a member of an Old West Regional Commission subcommittee which published a study last spring investigating the feasibility of a regional veterinary school.

The proposed school would serve Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. The plans suggested by the commission would establish a veterinary science school in one of those states and draw enrollment and financing from them. This idea would save students the cost of non-resident tuition and provide them with quality veterinary education, the commission suggested.

#### Lincoln recommended

The feasibility study conducted last spring established several recommendations for the regional school, according to Don Nelson, director of planning and programming for Nebraska. Lincoln was recommended as the site because of its "geographic location and the fact that many of the facilities needed for a veterinary school already are available at UNL and would avoid costly duplication of equipment," he said.

The study also made suggestions for curriculum, buildings and budget proposals. Nelson was unable to give cost estimates for the school.

Further progress on the veterinary school "depends on when all five state legislatures meet and approve the proposed idea," Nelson said.

"We're waiting for a reading from the states before moving into the next phase of the project."

Nelson explained that phase three of the veterinary school proposal is the design and drawing of detailed plans for the buildings. However, the Old West Commission is not going to invest money in an idea that may not have the necessary support and financing behind it, as the state legislatures are providing funds for phase three, he said.

#### Approval long in coming?

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### Legislative approval of the veterinary science school

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Nebraska, said the state's sentiments generally were in support of the school.

"We'd like some more information on the school and its plans, but we do approve of the idea," he said.

Gordon Hovan, Montana's representative to the Old West Regional Commission, said that state's governor has been "supportive of the concept all along, and Montana's role has been positive." Hovan added "it's going to be a long affair" before all five states give the go-ahead for the veterinary school.

North Dakota will vote to continue an in-depth study of the feasibility of the veterinary school, according to Woody Gagnon, North Dakota representative to the commission.

"We have no hang-ups about Nebraska as the school site," Gagnon said, adding that North Dakota cannot approve the school project until "we know what we're approving." He said that won't be known until the study is completed.

South Dakota is "very guarded" about entering into the proposed school plans, according to Ted Muenster, South Dakota's representative.

"In recent years, we have had very good contracts with Iowa State University and Kansas State University in veterinary programs," Muenster said. "If we can maintain those contracts, there is no overwhelming demand to have more veterinary science programs in South Dakota."

#### Little enthusiasm

The state has "very little enthusiasm" to send money to out-of-state sources, he said. Muenster added that a detailed school project is premature but said there is a need to provide veterinarians for the state less expensively.

The Wyoming representative, David Freudenthal, was unable to be contacted. He was absent from an Old West Regional Commission representatives' meeting this week in Montana.

An Oct. 8, meeting in Great Falls, Mont. will bring together all representatives from the five states, as well as the five state governors who are on the board of directors of the commission.

Another drawback to progress on the veterinary school is the construction of a similar school in Colorado. Twichaus said the Colorado school may attract some of the Old West members, thus sapping support from the Old West project.

"We're waiting to see what Colorado is going to do," Twichaus said.

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