

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Onderstepoort Laboratories as a Veterinary Research Institute



On the 1st of October, 1908, Sir Arnold Theiler together with his small staff, occupied the newly constructed laboratory at Onderstepoort some seven miles north of Pretoria. At that time the Transvaal had been granted responsible government. To General Louis Botha and his Government of the day full credit must be given for the foresight which prompted the erection of what was then regarded as a modern and well-equipped Veterinary Research Laboratory. At the same time the establishment of the laboratory must be regarded as a tribute to the personal prestige of Theiler who had clearly demonstrated the value of veterinary science not only to the animal industry of the country but to agriculture in its widest sense during the devastating outbreaks of Rinderpest in 1896 and 1898 in the days of the South African Republic. In 1910, with the formation of the Union of South Africa, Onderstepoort became the headquarters for Veterinary Research in the Union. From those small beginnings Onderstepoort has developed into a large Institute employing some 70 professional officers, 80 technicians, supported by an administrative and clerical staff of about 170 with a total staff of approximately 600 employees.

The fiftieth anniversary of Onderstepoort was celebrated in October, 1958. The leaders of organised agriculture in the Union were invited to the celebrations to afford them an opportunity of gaining first-hand information of the work in progress at the Institute. To commemorate this occasion a special supplement to this volume will shortly be issued. This supplement will include a short historical review of the scientific contributions made by Onderstepoort and its staff not only to the animal industry of South Africa but also to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the biological field.

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