
Ralph W. Phillips†

Editor, 1942–1949

Many of those who now look to the *Journal of Animal Science* as a major source of new information, and as an important avenue of publication, were not yet born when it first appeared half a century ago. For them, and for those of us who are older, it may be useful to refresh our memories as to how the *Journal* came to be, and of the circumstances under which it was conceived and initiated.

The American Society of Animal Production and its predecessor the American Society of Animal Nutrition, used an annual proceedings as the main avenue of publication from 1908 through 1940. In a few instances (1915–16, 1917–19, and 1925–26), proceedings for more than one year were combined into single volumes. Then, in 1942, the Society began the issuance of a quarterly scientific journal. This constituted a major shift in the policy and direction of the Society, a shift that came about as a result of actions during the brief period from 1938 to 1941. It was not until two decades later that this change in direction was reflected in a change in the Society’s own name.

Like many others who began their careers in animal science research in the 1930s, I had struggled with the problem of finding suitable avenues of publication. But it was early during the 1938 annual meeting of the Society that I first became involved in a discussion of the need for a journal. A small group, the members of which were or had been involved in physiology of reproduction research at the University of Missouri, had a private dinner at the Palmer House in Chicago, with Dr. George H. Hart (University of California, Davis) as a guest. It was near midnight when we moved outside to return to our respective hotels. But a few of us, including Dr. Hart, paused for perhaps 15 minutes under the hotel’s marquee for a “sidewalk seminar.” Dr. Hart turned the talk to avenues of publication for the results of animal science research, and it soon became evident that the members of the group were united in the view that the time was at hand when the Society should consider moving from an annual proceedings to a scientific journal. Subsequent events showed that others had been thinking along the same lines.

At its business meeting on November 26, 1938, the Society instructed its Executive Committee to investigate the feasibility of publishing a quarterly journal, and to report to the 1939 meeting. Dr. Hart, who had been elected Vice President at the 1938 meeting, was subsequently designated by the Executive Committee to investigate the matter.

At its business meeting on December 2, 1939, the Society, based on a report by Dr. Hart, decided that the proceedings needed more editorial review, that the Society needed a publi-

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cation, and that an Editorial Committee should be appointed by the Executive Committee to edit the proceedings for 1939, and to present to the 1940 meeting a proposal for publishing the 1940 proceedings. It was expected that questions of policy would be established and machinery for a publication set in motion. Dr. R. M. Bethke (Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, Wooster), who was then Secretary-Treasurer of the Society, was subsequently named chairman of that Editorial Committee.

At the business meeting on November 30, 1940, Dr. Bethke submitted the Editorial Committee’s report, which the Society adopted. Thus, it was decided that: 1) the Society should publish a quarterly journal, beginning in 1942; 2) the proceedings for 1940 should be published as in former years; and 3) the Executive Committee should appoint an Editorial Board of not fewer than seven members, an Editor, and, if deemed necessary, a Business Manager. Also, the Executive Committee was empowered to approve the editorial policies set by the Editorial Board, so publishing a quarterly journal could proceed without delay.

During the 1940 meeting, Professor W. H. Peters (University of Minnesota) was elected President of the Society. At the time I was head of the Animal Husbandry Department at Utah State University. Shortly after I arrived back in Logan following the annual meeting I received a letter from Professor Peters, asking if I would take on the combined tasks of Editor and Chairman of the Editorial Board for the as-yet-unnamed journal.

It was not a propitious time to assume such a responsibility. I was only in my second year at Logan, and I knew privately that I would be returning to Beltsville, Maryland in mid-1941 to take up the post of Senior Animal Husbandman, in Charge of Genetic Investigations in the then Bureau of Animal Industry, USDA. But the challenge was one from which I couldn’t walk away. So, shortly thereafter, Professor Peters received my letter of acceptance.

There was much hectic activity during 1941, sandwiched among completion of my duties in Logan, moving back across the United States, resettling, and picking up the threads of a new position. An Editorial Board had to be formed, an editorial policy drafted, a printer found, and a printing contract made. Papers had to be attracted and edited so that at least a small backlog of acceptable material would be ready when publication was scheduled to begin in 1942. Moreover, a format had to be decided upon, and a name for the new journal had to be selected. Somehow all these things got done, the actions of the Executive Committee regarding editorial policy and other matters pertaining to the Journal were approved by the Society at its business meeting on November 29, 1941, and my appointment as Editor was formally announced at that meeting.

The selection of a name for the new journal was an interesting exercise. After obtaining proposals from the Editorial Board, several alternatives were submitted by mail to the Society’s members to obtain their views. As I recall, they were Journal of Animal Science, Journal of Animal Production, and Journal of the American Society of Animal Production. The response was overwhelmingly in favor of Journal of Animal Science. Thus, as noted earlier, the Journal was very much a bellwether, because it was almost exactly 21 years after a decision was taken on November 30, 1940, to publish a journal until the Society decided on November 24, 1961, to change its name from American Society of Animal Production to American Society of Animal Science.

An important element in the editorial policy was a decision to publish abstracts of papers to be presented at annual meetings in the Journal (i.e., in the November issues just in advance of the times when the annual meetings were then being held). But this could not be done in 1941 because the Society had no formal publication that year. Thus, abstract of papers presented at the 1941 meeting appeared in the February 1942 issue (Vol. 1, No. 1), and those of papers to be presented at the 1942 meeting appeared in the November 1942 issue (Vol. 1, No. 4).

Members of the Editorial Board were selected with a view to providing broad subject-matter and geographic coverage. Initial members were Dr. W. E. Carroll, general livestock, University of Illinois; Dr. H. H. Cole, physiology, University of California (Davis); Dean J. A. Hill, wool, University of Wyoming; Dr. W. E. Krauss, nutrition, Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station (Wooster); Professor W. J. Loeffel, meats, University of Nebraska; C. D. Lowe, extension, USDA; Dr. J. L. Lush, genetics, Iowa State University; and Dr. W. E. Peterson, dairy, University of Minnesota. A pattern of rotation was also established. Dr. A. D. Weber (Kansas State University), who was then Secretary-Treasurer of the Society, was designated Business Manager of the Journal.

World War II was already under way in Europe as plans for a journal were evolving. By the time Vol. 1, No. 1 came off the press the United States was fully engaged on both the European and Pacific fronts. Research programs were reduced or in some cases eliminated, many research workers were diverted to wartime activities, many data were left in files for later analysis, and the supply of scientific papers was consequently
limited. Too, the Journal was being operated on a very limited budget. To illustrate the point, the society at its business meeting on November 30, 1940, decided to increase annual dues from $2.50 to $3.00 to meet the increased expenses of publishing a journal. At the end of 1942 the Society had 496 members, and 177 nonmembers had subscribed to the Journal. It is not surprising, then, that the issues of the Journal in the early years were quite thin, compared to much heftier issues in later years.

World War II also had a major impact on my work as Editor. At the request of the Department of State, I spent the period from early February 1943 to late March 1944 serving as consultant to the governments of China and of prepartition India. During my absence from Beltsville one of my associates, Dr. Ralph G. Schott, served as Acting Editor of the Journal, and kept the work moving effectively until I returned.

In December 1946 I took up a post with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Geographically this involved only a move from Beltsville to FAO’s temporary headquarters in Washington, D.C. Although the FAO did not move to Rome until 1951, I was called upon to do a great deal of international travel, and getting the Journal out on schedule was a continuing gamble. So arrangements were made by the Society for Dr. L. E. Casida (University of Wisconsin) to serve as Associate Editor from February 1947 through February 1949. Then, beginning with the May 1949 issue, Dr. Casida took over as Editor. I gave some limited assistance in the role of Editorial Adviser through November 1951.

In spite of the many hurdles that had to be cleared in getting the Journal started, and in keeping it moving on schedule, every issue was off the press and in the mail within the month of issue shown on the cover, during the period I served as Editor (i.e., from Vol. 1, No. 1 in February 1942 through Vol. 8, No. 1 in February 1949).

One final word about the Society’s proceedings: recognizing that they contained a great deal of useful information, which might not be readily available to new generations of animal scientists, I prepared an “Index to the Proceedings of the American Society of Animal Production,” and it was published in the Journal, Vol. 5, pages 87–138, in 1946. It was republished in 1965 in Vol. 24, pages 1355–1387, when Dr. A. B. Chapman (University of Wisconsin) was serving as Editor.

As noted earlier, the years 1938 to 1941 were years of change in the Society. Out of that change the Journal of Animal Science emerged in 1942. And over the last half-century it has grown and prospered. I was fortunate, through my role as founding Editor, to be able to play a part in that change. It is seldom that one has such an exceptional opportunity, and I continue to cherish it.

Addendum

The American Society of Animal Science recognized Dr. Phillip’s exceptional contributions in a special citation published in 1963 (J. Anim. Sci. 22: 280). The citation and a photograph of Dr. Phillips at that time are published as part of the proceedings of the 54th Annual Meeting of the ASAS. At that meeting, Dr. Phillips presented a paper titled “Animal products in the diets of present and future world populations” (J. Anim. Sci. 22:251).

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