Animal diseases are known to be the origin of many human diseases, and there are many examples from ancient civilizations of plagues that arose from animals, domesticated and wild. Records of attempts to control zoonoses are almost as old. The early focus on food-borne illness evolved into veterinary medicine's support of public health efforts. Key historical events, disease outbreaks, and individuals responsible for their control are reviewed and serve as a foundation for understanding the current and future efforts in veterinary public health. Animal medicine and veterinary public health have been intertwined since humans first began ministrations to their families and animals. In the United States, the veterinary medical profession has effectively eliminated those major problems of animal health that had serious public health ramifications. These lessons and experiences can serve as a model for other countries. Our past must also be a reminder that the battle for human and animal health is ongoing. New agents emerge to threaten human and animal populations. With knowledge of the past, coupled with new technologies and techniques, we must be vigilant and carry on.
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Keywords
Veterinary Public Health; Food-borne illnesses; Historic outbreaks; Zoonoses

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