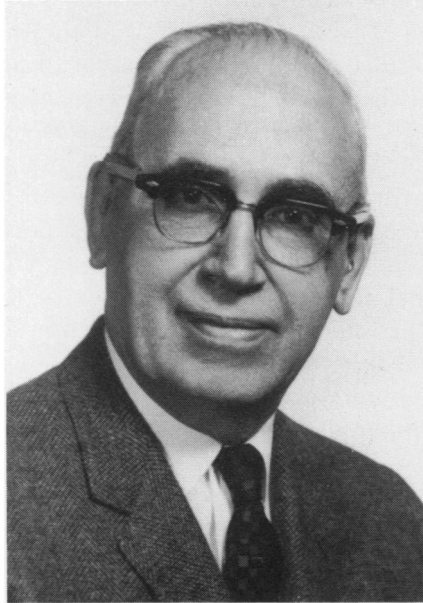


**American Association of Avian Pathologists**  
**Tribute to**  
**Henry Van Roekel**  
**(1901-1982)**



After a prolonged illness, Dr. Henry Van Roekel died March 6, 1982, in Pella, Iowa, where he and his wife, Tene, had moved following retirement in 1965. He was one of the few, including such contemporaries as Drs. F. R. Beaudette, J. R. Delaplane, E. L. Jungherr, P. P. Levine, and W. R. Hinshaw, who were the giants in North America in the early development of knowledge of avian diseases. For most of their working lives they were close friends and rather intense rivals in their own way.

Dr. Van Roekel was born October 28, 1901, in Sioux Center, Iowa. He received his D.V.M. from Iowa State University in 1925 and B.S. in 1928. In 1926, he received the M.S. degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and then was appointed as Chief of Laboratory, Department of Veterinary Science at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, later to become the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In 1927, he returned to Iowa State and then went to the George Hooper Foundation for Medical

Research in San Francisco to study diseases of wildlife. In 1929, he returned to the previous position in Massachusetts, where he continued until retirement, except for an interval to earn the Ph.D. degree at Yale University in 1934.

Dr. Van Roekel was intensely dedicated to his work. He was able to identify the central issues of a problem and apply thorough and painstaking effort to gain an understanding of these issues. Although he published extensively, he typically did not publish unless he was satisfied that the information was significant and that the results were accurate in both a narrow and a broad sense. He was impatient with superficiality, demanded a great deal of himself, and expected that others also should perform to their best ability.

Dr. Van Roekel investigated a number of avian diseases but was best known for his work with pullorum disease, infectious bronchitis, and *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*. As one of the leaders in investigating the epidemiology and control of *Salmonella pullorum* when it was the major disease, it was appropriate that he was the author selected to write the chapter on the disease in each edition of Diseases of Poultry published during his active career. He was among the early investigators of infectious bronchitis and pioneered in 1941 by being the first to immunize field flocks. The strain (Massachusetts) he selected for field application continues in use and is a reference strain used worldwide. He was also the first, in 1948, to immunize field flocks for Newcastle disease and used a mesogenic strain by wing-web vaccination.

Work with *M. gallisepticum*, chiefly in chickens, was Dr. Van Roekel's crowning achievement. Although much excellent work was being done by other investigators, the research team that he led was the first to demonstrate practical feasibility of developing and maintaining breeding stock free of infections. This critically important field work was done with the wholehearted cooperation of Walter Staples as a member of R. C. Cobb, Inc.

Always a leader, Dr. Van Roekel was acutely aware of the major supporting contributions of his immediate colleagues. His longest term and most productive contributing associates included Dr. K. L. Bullis, Miriam C. Clark, and Olga M. (Olesiuk) Weinack.

Dr. Van Roekel was cognizant of the necessity of developing and supporting strong regional and national professional organizations. He was a major contributor to the Northeastern Pullorum Disease Conference (now Northeastern Conference on Avian Diseases) and was its permanent secretary for the 10 years

before his retirement. He was one of the founders of the American Association of Avian Pathologists, having been a member of the Organizing Committee, serving on the board of directors for the first four years of its existence, and was the second president in 1959-1960. He played a major role in developing *Avian Diseases*, first published in 1957, and was a member of the editorial board for the first 8 years of publication. The transfer of publication of *Avian Diseases* in 1960 to AAAP marked the successful combination of the complementary objectives of the two development efforts.

Other organizations in which he played a strong supporting role were the American Veterinary Medical Association, the U.S. Livestock Sanitary Association, and the Conference of Research Workers in Animal Diseases.

The accomplishments of Dr. Van Roekel were formally recognized through a number of awards. In 1952 he was the recipient of the Tom Newman International Award from the Poultry Association of Great Britain. For distinction in research, teaching and service, he was awarded a Commonwealth Professorship in Poultry Pathology by the University of Massachusetts in 1961. Coincident with his retirement, the American Association of Avian Pathologists made him an Honorary Member in 1968. Of special significance to him was receipt of the Stang Award in 1972 from his alma mater Iowa State University; the award is made for outstanding professional achievement in education, government, industry, practice or other professional endeavors in Veterinary Medicine.

Because Dr. Van Roekel was keenly aware that research is useful only if results are made available to consumers, he frequently addressed industry groups, often wrote articles for industry journals, and carried on a voluminous correspondence. His knowledge, advice, and assistance were widely sought and resulted in appointment to numerous state, regional and national committees, boards, and advisory groups and in visits from people of various parts of the world.

Dr. Van Roekel's personal code of intellectual integrity, dependability, and perseverance were coupled with appreciation that major accomplishments demand great effort. He urged and expected colleagues to follow a similar code. He left a record of accomplishment that has resulted in major long-term improvement in prevention and control of poultry diseases. He left his mark and paid his dues many times over.