The Society for Theriogenology celebrates 60 years
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“We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size.”

Bernard of Chartres
12th Century

Summary
The Society for Theriogenology traces its roots to 1954 and celebrates its sixtieth anniversary at this year’s annual meeting. The society was founded to meet a specific need of the livestock industry in the Rocky Mountains. Over the subsequent six decades it has undergone several changes in name and grown into an international organization that serves the educational needs of veterinarians involved in the reproductive management of all species served by the profession.

Keywords: History, breeding soundness, professional organization

Formation
The early history of the organization now known as the Society for Theriogenology was described Dr. B.W. Pickett and by Dr. H. J. Hill in a paper he was scheduled to present at the Society’s Annual Meeting in 1979 planned for Mobile, Alabama.

Dr. Hill writes of a blizzard that struck north central Colorado in December 1949. By March of 1950, ranchers noticed lesions involving the perineum and scrotum of herd sires. The expertise of the staff of the Colorado A&M Artificial Breeding Service was enlisted to assess the extent of damage to the bull herd in the blizzard area. Dr. Hill and four or five senior veterinary students were dispatched armed with a rudimentary mobile laboratory and artificial vaginas made of “thirty feet of radiator hose hastily conscripted from the supply room of the local Ford dealer”.

Unexpectedly, these pioneers found that the severity of lesions was not correlated with semen quality but that ten to 12 percent of the bulls examined did not produce semen of sufficient quality or had physical defects that made them unsatisfactory breeders. Thus, the need for a standardized procedure to assess the breeding potential of bulls was recognized.

Veterinary practitioners and ranchers recognized the need to remove unsatisfactory bulls from the breeding herd and a rancher and Colorado state legislator became a supporter. The state legislature passed a bill giving financial support and the Colorado Bull Testing Service was initiated in the fall of 1953. Bull owners were asked to pay $6.00 for each bull examined.

Evolution
Rocky Mountain Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness of Bulls
In February 1954 about 22 veterinary practitioners joined with the clinicians at Colorado A&M (now Colorado State University) to organize the Rocky Mountain Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness of Bulls. Dr. Eli VonTour of Alliance, NE was elected president and Dr. H. J. Hill was elected secretary/treasurer and appointed editor of the society’s journal. The stated purpose of the society was to “disseminate information relative to reproductive physiology, criteria of semen evaluation and physical examination of bulls as applied by the Colorado Bull Testing Service”.


Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness of Bulls
The name of the organization was amended to the Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness of Bulls in 1956 to reflect the fact that members were from outside the Rocky Mountain area and the society was given a charter under the laws of Colorado in 1961.3

The American Veterinary Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness
Another name change was made in 1963 to the American Veterinary Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness to reflect its stature as a national organization with its focus expanded to include the study of bovine females.4

Society for Theriogenology
The name was again changed in 1974 to the Society for Theriogenology in recognition of the society’s ever expanding interest in the reproductive processes of all species served by the profession of veterinary medicine.3

American College of Theriogenologists
In the 1960’s efforts began to establish an American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)-recognized specialty in veterinary reproduction. After several unsuccessful attempts, probationary approval was given to the fledgling American College of Theriogenologists (ACT) by the AVMA’s House of Delegates at its meeting in Detroit in 1971.5 This organization was intended to complement the Society and Dr. David Bartlett wrote “I would like to call special attention to the very specific constitutional commitment toward the practitioner of veterinary medicine which are intended to fulfill the intent and desire of recognition and certification of competence of veterinary practitioners in theriogenology. It is the intention that this college will be very closely related to the society and it is the intention that the members of the college will maintain dual membership.”

Theriogenology Foundation
The Theriogenology Foundation was established in 2009 for the purpose of providing funds to support and advance theriogenology.

Management
During its first years, the affairs of the society were managed by volunteers who were elected to the various offices and the board of directors. The princely sum of $100 per month was allocated to the secretary/treasurer to fund the office and publication expenses of the society in 1964, provided that much was available in the coffers.6 By 1971 it became obvious that professional management was required and the Society has subsequently been served by several management organizations.

Garey Management Organization (GMO); 1971-1999
Bob Garey (1971-1986) of Hastings, NE was the first executive director of the society and is credited with establishing sound financial management procedures and providing the organizational skills needed to guide an increase in membership. Upon Mr. Garey’s retirement, GMO was led by Don Ellerbee who served the society from 1986 until 1999. No mention of GMO would be complete without recognition of the efforts of Ms. Jan Weiler, a longtime employee of GMO. Jan was the telephone voice of the Society and managed the annual meetings (and most other things). Her dedicated service to the society is well-remembered by many society members.

Walker Management Group; 1999-2002
The business of the society was supervised by Walker Management Group, Nashville, TN from 1999 to 2002.
Franz Management; 2003-present
The current executive director of the society is Dr. Charles Franz of Franz Management, Montgomery, AL.

**Continuing education**

The purpose of the Society was and continues to be provision of the most current information available. Initially, the focus was on information relative to the evaluation of breeding soundness of bulls but the emphasis has broadened greatly over the past 60 years. The society has met its goal of providing continuing education in a number of ways.

**Short courses**

When the society was founded, prospective members were required to attend short courses offered at numerous sites throughout the United States for training in the theory and practice of evaluation of breeding soundness. This requirement was dropped after several years when the material was included in the curricula of the veterinary colleges.

**Annual conferences**

The society, in collaboration with the ACT, sponsors an annual conference which provides members with the opportunity for continuing education. The conference has grown from a single day held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the AVMA to a multi-day event composed of several simultaneous topic tracks. In addition, pre- and post-conference symposia offering indepth training are provided to members and livestock and companion animal breeders.

*Memorable annual conferences.* All annual conferences are memorable for their educational content and collegial interaction but a few have become etched in the memories of those who attended or tried to attend.

**Mobile, Alabama—1979**

The annual conference of the society was scheduled for Mobile, Alabama in September of 1979. Unfortunately, that meeting was cancelled by the arrival of Hurricane Frederic in Mobile Bay in time to register for the meeting on the evening of September 12, 1979. Frederic was a category 3 hurricane and raked the Mobile Bay area with winds gusting from 100 to 145 miles per hour from the evening of September 12 until the early morning of September 13. Because of the extensive damage, the name Frederic was retired and will never again be issued for an Atlantic hurricane.

**Vancouver, British Columbia—2001**

The annual conference of the society was scheduled for Vancouver, British Columbia to begin on the evening of September 12, 2001 in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP). The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 resulted in closure of the airspace over the United States and Canada and airplanes were grounded. Those who were in Vancouver were unable to leave and those who were planning to attend were unable to travel. The president of the AABP wrote that the attack was the defining event of his presidency.

**Publications**

*Journal of the Rocky Mountain Society for the Study of Breeding Soundness.* Throughout its history, the Society has used a number of publications to achieve its purpose “to disseminate what information is available currently, relative to evaluation of bulls for breeding soundness, with the sincere hope that the criteria, techniques, philosophies, and facts presented will become the common guide for all who offer such a service to the livestock industry”.
The early publications of the society consisted of a series of pamphlets setting forth the philosophy of evaluation of bulls for breeding soundness; Volume 4, number 1 giving the purpose and bylaws of the society and a brief treatise on technique of evaluation; Volume 5, number 1 a detailed discussion of techniques of all methods of semen collection and a paper on infertility in the bull; Volume 5 number 2 the printed papers presented at the society meeting in Steamboat Springs, CO in the fall of 1955.

The fifth publication in the series is Volume 6, number 2 which is the workbook detailing the original criteria recommended by the society for the evaluation of bulls for breeding soundness. These standards were used by members of the society from their adoption in 1956 until the criteria were revised in 1976.11

These journals were published at irregular intervals which was explained by the subheading “published when the spirit moves and time permits”. Journals of the society were produced in a shed at the Colorado State University Bull Farm by typewriter and mimeograph, stapled and mailed to members. Unfortunately, a flood in the early 1960’s destroyed the shed and all copies of the publications.12

Proceedings of the Annual Conference. The society has regularly published the proceedings of its annual conferences and distributed them to members as a means to fulfill its mission of providing continuing education for members. More recently, pre- and post-conference symposia have been added to the society’s educational offerings and the manuscripts from these presentations are likewise published.

Compilations. Several compilations of manuscripts were collected and disseminated to members of the society as a method of providing continuing education.


Manuals. Species manuals were prepared by experts in their field and distributed to members of the society. A list of the species manuals is presented in the table.

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<tr>
<th>Manual title</th>
<th>Year of publication</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brood Mare</td>
<td>1978</td>
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<td>Stallion</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>Sheep and Goat</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>Breeding Soundness Evaluation of Bulls</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>Breeding Soundness Evaluation of the Boar</td>
<td>1983</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cow Manual</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<td>Manual for Embryo Transfer</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductive Herd Health (Dairy Section)</td>
<td>1988</td>
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<td>Sow Manual</td>
<td>1989</td>
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Table. List of species manuals produced and distributed by the Society for Theriogenology.

Fact Sheets. In the late 1980’s and 1990’s, a series of Fact Sheets prepared and reviewed by members of the society replaced the species manuals.

Clinical Theriogenology. In 2009, the Executive Boards of the Society for Theriogenology and the ACT established the peer reviewed quarterly journal titled Clinical Theriogenology as a means to publish the proceedings of the annual conference and to provide an outlet for members to distribute their research results and clinical observations. Clinical Theriogenology is the official journal of the Society.
for Theriogenology and the ACT and is available in print and online as a benefit of membership in the society.

Zemjanis Outreach Fund

The Zemjanis Outreach Fund was established to provide partial support for veterinarians from developing countries to travel to the United States for educational purposes.

Awards

A number of awards have been established by the society and ACT to recognize the professional accomplishments of members.

- The David E. Bartlett Award and Lecture was established in 1984.
- The Theriogenologist of the Year Award was established in 1999.
- The Steiner Award for Practitioner Excellence was established in 2009.

Nandi—Symbol of the Society for Theriogenology

In a letter dated August 20, 1982 addressed to Ms. Jan Weiler, Dr. D.F. Walker describes the origin of “Nandi” which has become the symbol of the society.4

“In July of 1956 when Harold Hill was putting the Volume 6, Number 2 publication together, which became the Society workbook, he was inspired by an article in Holiday magazine which carried a picture of “Nandi” and by an inscription to adopt Nandi as the logo. The inscription was as follows: ‘From atop Chamundi Hill at Mysore, the giant image of Nandi, sacred bull and symbol of fruitfulness casts his benign gaze upon his worshipful flock.’ Aubrey Menen; Holiday, June 1956

I (Walker) was also quite inspired with the picture of the bull and the inscription as it appeared in our journal. While in India I made a trip to Mysore to see Nandi. The statue was quite impressive but I discovered that it was not the same Nandi as appeared in the Holiday magazine, which we had adopted. The Nandi pictured in the magazine and used as the Society logo is located in Oraiwa, India and is a copy of the original at Mysore. Apparently the author of the article, Aubrey Menen, selected the wrong Nandi from the picture file when the article was published.

I acquired an exact copy of the original Mysore Nandi and from this a brass casting was made by the brasssmith in our village. I would like to give the brass Nandi to the Society to be a traveling badge of office and pass from chairman to chairman. I will send the Nandi to the Milwaukee meeting. It weighs 22 pounds and will make a beautiful desk ornament for the chairman.”

Conclusions

The Society for Theriogenology was born of the need for the veterinary profession to serve the livestock industry for the specific purpose of identifying bulls that were not suitable for breeding. The original focus was narrow and the horizon was close. Over the 60 years of its existence, the society has grown in membership and expanded its focus and horizon to meet other needs of its members and the animal owners they serve. Indeed, those of us who have been privileged to have been members of the Society for Theriogenology have been the beneficiaries of the tireless effort and vision of the founders, those giants on whose shoulders we have been carried high.

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References