Walter Stephen “Brick” Smith
Veterinary surgeon
Born: August 9, 1910; Tocumwal, NSW
Died: January 19, 2006; Adelaide

WALTER “Brick” Smith was a prominent veterinary surgeon who made significant contributions to SA and his profession. Born in Tocumwal, NSW, he was educated at Hay Memorial High School and the University of Sydney. He graduated BVSect in 1932 and commenced his professional working life with the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture.

He spent three years in Tasmania before moving to SA as government veterinary officer and also as lecturer in veterinary hygiene and allied subjects at Roseworthy Agricultural College.

During World War II, he attained the rank of major and the post of deputy assistant director of hygiene with the 1st Armoured Division and the 3rd Australian Infantry Division.

After the war, he returned to the Department of Agriculture in SA and became deputy chief inspector of stock in 1952 and chief inspector of stock in 1955. At his retirement he was also chief government veterinary surgeon.

The years immediately before and after World War II were lean ones for the veterinary profession in SA; its numbers were small, and its value to the primary industry of the state was not adequately recognised in high places. The remarkable improvement in the following years was largely due to the faith and energy of Brick Smith and a small band of professional colleagues, to whom he characteristically gave much of the credit.

However, it was principally through Brick’s own untiring efforts that SA was able to boast a harmony and integration of animal health services, private practice, and laboratory services which were the admiration of all other states.

He was the inspiration behind the highly successful campaign for the control and eradication of footrot in sheep. Other notable contributions he made were in the areas of eradication of pul- lorum disease of poultry and pleuropneumonia of cattle.

He also gave notable service as chairman of the Stock Medicines Board, as chief inspector of apiaries, and to the Veterinary Public Health Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

He was active in Australian Veterinary Association affairs for many years, serving as a member of Divisional Committees and the Australian Veterinary Association Council. He was elected federal president of the Australian Veterinary Association in 1965-66. In 1971, one of the highest honours in the veterinary profession was conferred on him when he was invested as a Fellow of the Australian Veterinary Association. Fellowships of this nature are reserved for veterinarians who have given outstanding service to their profession and Brick Smith was the first South Australian to receive this honour.

After his retirement in 1973, he continued to play a part in Association affairs researching the history of veterinary services in SA.

He is survived by Una, his wife of 71 years, children Jim, Helen and Sue, five grandchildren, nine great grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Information for this obituary was supplied by Walter Stephen Smith’s family and the Australian Veterinary Association.