

Alexander Millar Meek

April 11, 1926 — March 17, 1972

With the untimely passing of Dr. Alexander M. Meek, the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell lost one of its most outstanding professors of animal science. Professor Meek died in his native country of Scotland on March 17, 1972, after a very brief illness.

Professor Meek, known to everyone as “Sandy,” was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, the youngest son of Alexander M. Meek, Sr., and the late Grace Moodie Meek. He attended the George Heriot’s School of secondary education in Edinburgh. Sandy was not farm reared, but his love for animals led him into a distinguished career in animal science. During his early youth he worked on a purebred Ayrshire farm near his home on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

He attended the University of Edinburgh and earned a B.Sc. degree in agriculture in 1946. For two years following his graduation from the university, he was herdsman and farm manager for a large Ayrshire herd in Northumberland, England. In 1948 Sandy emigrated to Canada, where he became assistant herdsman at the Nappan Experimental Farm, Nappan, Nova Scotia.

On April 14, 1949, he married Helen E. Coates of Nappan, Nova Scotia. They came to the United States and Sandy was appointed assistant herdsman of the Kansas State University dairy herd at Manhattan, Kansas. At the same time he enrolled in the College of Agriculture and received a bachelor’s degree in dairy science in 1952.

For the next two years Sandy was employed as assistant herdsman at Strathglass Farms, Port Chester, New York. In 1955 he accepted the position of farm manager at Quiet Valley Farms in Newton, Connecticut. After a successful career as herdsman and farm manager, he entered Iowa State University as a graduate assistant. He was awarded the M.S. degree in animal breeding in 1959 and the Ph.D. in animal breeding and animal reproduction in 1961.

He joined the Animal Science Extension staff at Cornell in September 1961 and immediately became one of the most sought-after extension specialists in the College of Agriculture. His practical experience and technical training combined made him one of the most widely accepted authorities in the field of dairy cattle breeding and herd management. His interests were not confined to animal breeding and he developed a thorough knowledge of mastitis control, waste management, dairy cattle housing, free stall management, and dairy cattle feeding management.

Cooperatively with dairy scientists at the National Institute of Research for Dairying, Reading, England, Professor Meek and his co-workers developed a milking management technique for the control of mastitis in dairy cattle. He was instrumental in organizing with the New York State Veterinary College a three-year field research project on mastitis control in twenty-seven dairy herds in Cayuga, Onondaga, and Madison counties. The application of the milking management technique and dry cow therapy has proved to be a major breakthrough in the control of mastitis.

Professor Meek was chairman of the College of Agriculture Interdepartmental Dairy Industry Committee. This committee provides the overall leadership and support for the development and implementation of dairy extension work for New York State.

He served as the Animal Science representative for the College of Agriculture on a joint project with the Miner Research Institute, Chazy, New York. His major responsibility was to plan the dairy cattle research facilities, assemble the staff, assemble a dairy herd, and help plan and coordinate the research work to be carried out at the Institute. Under his able leadership this project came into being, but unfortunately he did not live to see the facilities put into operation. He also provided major inputs for the planning of the Animal Science Dairy and Training Research Center at Harford, New York.

Professor Meek was a member of the Northeast Dairy Practices Committee, an exofficio member of the Eastern AI Cooperative Sire Selection Committee, and liaison with the New York State Federation of Ayrshire Breeders. He was a member of the American Dairy Science Association, the American Society of Animal Production, Sigma Xi, and an honorary member of Gamma Sigma Delta. He was also a deacon in the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca.

Sandy Meek was capable, cooperative, hardworking, with integrity above reproach, but more than that he was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. Never was he known to raise his voice in anger toward anyone. He was kind, compassionate, and thoughtful of his fellow man. He had the ability very few have: he never "lost his cool." He was a friend to all who knew him.

He is survived by his wife, Helen E. Meek, and a daughter, Alexandra Grace Meek, both of Ithaca; his father, Alexander M. Meek, Sr., of Lauder, Scotland; three aunts, Miss Molly Moodie, Miss Gladys Meek, and Mrs. Grace Duff, and an uncle, William Meek, all of Edinburgh.

Charles R. Henderson, Sydney A. Asdell, Harry R. Ainslie