

## **IT'S NOT JUST THE VETS!**

Dr. Paul Cadogan

Veterinarians do not work alone. Just like physicians work with the support of nurses, medical technologists and other support staff, so do veterinarians have veterinary technicians, assistants and others working in support.

Animal Health Assistants, the officially recognized Veterinary Technicians in Jamaica, are trained para-professionals, usually completing a two-year course in animal health and veterinary public health. They are enrolled by the Jamaica Veterinary Board and must, at all times, carry out their duties under the supervision of a registered veterinarian.

From the mid-1970's, they became the "legs" on which the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture stood, supporting the "backbone" of veterinarians in delivering services to farmers across the island. Assisting and advising farmers, disease surveillance, sample collection, delivering basic (sometimes more than basic!) clinical care, working in quarantine, the laboratory, vaccination of animals, artificial insemination, assisting the veterinarian are some of the many duties AHA's have carried out. Many went on to further studies and became veterinarians, and today students still use the technician route on their road to become vets.



Above: Drawing a blood sample from the tail vein of a cow.

Medical and Laboratory Technologists are also a part of diagnostic support, disease control testing, food safety interventions and more. Pharmacists dispense medication and advise the public on their safe use according to veterinary prescriptions.



Above: A Laboratory Technologist at work

In clinical practice in Jamaica, many veterinary clinic assistants are trained by their employing vets themselves in animal restraint, basic clinical assistance procedures, patient care and monitoring. And mention must be made of the non-medical support staff – managers, administrators, secretaries, receptionists, attendants, drivers, all of whom make their contribution to the delivery and sustenance of veterinary services.

On this World Veterinary Day, we salute all members of our veterinary community, working to protect and preserve the health of our country.