

In memoriam

Jean Blancou, DVM, 1936-2010

World authority on rabies, historian and former Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (*Office International des Épizooties*: OIE)

Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur
Chevalier de l'Ordre national du mérite agricole
Commandeur de l'Ordre national du mérite agricole
Corresponding member of the Argentinean Academy of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine
Docteur honoris causa, Liege University (Belgium)
Foreign member of the Royal Belgian Academy of Agriculture
Foreign member of the Russian Academy of Agronomic Sciences
Honorary Director General of the OIE
Honorary Member of the British Veterinary Association
Médaille d'honneur, CNEVA
Member and previous President of the French Veterinary Academy
Member of the Academy of Sciences of Overseas Territories
Prix Trasbot, Académie vétérinaire de France, 1980
Vice President of the Société française d'histoire de la médecine et des sciences vétérinaires



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Jean-Marie Blancou was born in Bangui on 28 August 1936 and passed away in Paris on 10 November 2010 at the age of 74.

After studying at the Pierre de Fermat Lycée in Toulouse, Jean Blancou graduated from the Toulouse Veterinary School in 1960. He continued his studies in tropical veterinary medicine in Paris until 1963, extending his knowledge of immunology, microbiology, biochemistry and zoology, at the Institut Pasteur. He obtained his doctorate in biological sciences at the University of Nancy in 1982.

Jean Blancou commenced his career as technical adviser to the Veterinary Services of Ethiopia where he directed a campaign against rinderpest in the south of the county. From 1965 to 1967 he was deputy director of the national veterinary laboratory in Niamey where he was responsible for the diagnosis of animal diseases and the production of veterinary vaccines.

In 1967, he moved to the central livestock laboratory in Madagascar, where he commenced research on the diagnosis and control of dermatophilosis, bovine

tuberculosis and other bacterial and parasitic diseases.

In August 1968 he married Geneviève Orue.

In 1975 he was appointed as head of the national veterinary laboratory in Senegal, where he remained until 1977.

Initially deputy director, and then director of Research on rabies and wildlife diseases, at the World Health Organization collaborating centre in Nancy, he remained in this position until 1990. Jean Blancou was recognised as a world authority on rabies. He conducted research into the diagnosis, aetiology, epidemiology and control of rabies during his time in Nancy.

Between 1988 and 1990, Dr Blancou also headed the animal health and protection department of the *Centre national d'études vétérinaires et animales* (CNEVA) in Maisons-Alfort. On 1 January 1991, he was appointed director general of the World Organisation for Animal Health (*Office International des Épizooties*: OIE) and was re-elected in 1995 for a further five-year term, until he retired in 2000.

He attached great importance to the value of scientific publication and to the ethics involved in producing scientific literature. He had a very strong interest in the historical aspects of animal diseases and, in 2003, published a valuable book entitled *History of the surveillance and control of transmissible animal diseases*. He would always ensure that the most interesting and appropriate historic illustrations, irrespective of how difficult they were to obtain, were selected for the papers he published.

Among some of the activities Jean Blancou undertook during his retirement was the mammoth task of co-editing *Infectious and parasitic diseases of livestock* in French and English.

Dr Blancou authored over 370 scientific publications devoted to animal diseases, to the production and control of biologicals and, of course, many authoritative articles on rabies and vaccinology.

He was always generous with the scientific knowledge he possessed and never missed an opportunity to assist colleagues in the preparation or correction of manuscripts that they wished to submit to peer-reviewed journals.

He was gentle in nature and always softly spoken. As one of his colleagues wrote: 'we have lost a most gentle, thoughtful and kind man and the world has lost one of its stellar veterinarians'.

Despite his busy and brilliant career, Jean Blancou was a family man and devoted to the education of his children. During his illness, he showed great courage.

The *Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise 'G. Caporale'* has been privileged to benefit from the expert knowledge and experience that Dr Blancou so generously provided in his capacity as Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of *Veterinaria Italiana*.

Jean Blancou is survived by his wife, Geneviève, his children and grandchildren.