

History of veterinary science at James Cook University

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Veterinary Science at James Cook University dates back to 1969 when a small enthusiastic team initiated the Graduate Department of Tropical veterinary Science. An innovative mix of degrees and a substantial amount of support from the University, State and Federal governments as well as members of the veterinary profession, local farmers and international collaborators facilitated the rapid growth of the program. The Department spent ten years in temporary accommodation on the Pimlico Campus until it moved to purpose built facilities on the Douglas campus where it built a reputation for ground breaking research into national and international problems.

Changes in the funding model for Australian Universities and international student places required a major change in direction that resulted in the introduction of a Biomedical Sciences degree, a reorganisation in structure and a name change to the School of Biomedical Sciences as well as the establishment of the Australian Institute of Tropical Veterinary Science to maintain the veterinary focus. An extremely active honours and PhD program promoted innovative research. The health faculty expanded the range of degree programs including Nursing and rehabilitation sciences and in 2000 a medical degree program that had taken over 20 years to establish was commenced. The School made crucial contributions to the establishment of all of these programs with contract teaching vital for the establishment of many of the subjects.

An undergraduate veterinary degree program was commenced in 2005 with an intake of 72 students. The curriculum was developed as an undergraduate teaching model with full integration from second to fifth year. A name change to the School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences reflected the diverse range of teaching and research activities that the rapidly expanding School embraced. The School has an enviable history of innovative research, developing country project management and consultancies. However, maintaining the momentum in a challenging era of contracting funding despite potential pandemics and food production crises will continue to present immense challenges.