

# Lester E. Hanson, 1912–1985: A brief biography

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Lester E. Hanson was a nationally recognized animal scientist, researcher, and teacher of whom the American Society of Animal Science and the Minnesota Livestock industry can be justly proud. He was born on March 31, 1912, at Willmar, MN, and had eight brothers and sisters, all of whom were reared on a Traverse County farm near Graceville, MN. Following completion of rural school, he and his siblings graduated from the West Central School of Agriculture at Morris, MN. Lester graduated from there in 1929. He then operated

a 320-acre general livestock farm in Traverse County, MN, from 1929 to 1932.

Les, as he was known to many, enrolled at the University of Minnesota in 1932 and graduated with distinction in 1936 with a major in animal husbandry and a minor in plant pathology. All of his siblings also graduated from the University of Minnesota. Les had to earn funds to provide for his education. At different times in 1933, 1934, and 1935, he worked as a seed analyst with the State Seed Testing Laboratory, as a student worker for the Departments of Agronomy and Animal Husbandry, as an agent for Black Stem Rust Control with the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine of the USDA, and as a cattle brander with the Federal Drought Relief Program.

Upon completion of his undergraduate program, Les commenced graduate work at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, where he was a teaching and research assistant in animal husbandry. In 1937, he received an M.S. degree in animal husbandry with a minor in animal nutrition and a Ph.D. degree in 1940 with a major in animal husbandry and minors in animal nutrition and veterinary physiology. He studied animal husbandry in Denmark during 1937–38. While a graduate student at Cornell, Les married Gladys Diessner, a graduate in home economics at the University of Minnesota. Gladys and Les had three children, Bruce E., Ronald, and Karen, all of whom graduated from the University of Minnesota.

Hanson joined the Department of Animal Husbandry at the University of Nebraska as an instructor in 1940 and taught introductory animal husbandry, animal nutrition, and swine production. He also gave leadership to the research program in swine nutrition and management and was primarily responsible for the development of facilities at the Nebraska Swine Research Center, which was completed in 1948–49. He was promoted through the ranks to professor in 1949.

Les joined the staff of the Department of Animal Husbandry at the University of Minnesota in 1950, where he taught animal nutrition and feeding for both undergraduate and graduate students and managed the teaching and research herd of swine. In 1950, animal science research was rather poorly funded at Minnesota, but, with the aid of grant money that Hanson's reputation attracted, he was able to develop a research program in swine nutrition and management that was of major importance to the U.S. swine industry. Hanson is known throughout the United States and swine-pro-

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ducing areas of the world for his unique and forward-looking studies conducted in the mid-1950s, in which littermate pigs were fed diets typical of those fed in 1910, 1930, and 1954. Results of the study were published nationwide along with pictures of representative barrows fed the different diets. The very large differences in rate of gain dramatically demonstrated the chronological progress made in swine nutrition during a half-century.

Hanson also conducted basic research on the early weaning (5 to 10 d old) of pigs, vitamin E requirements, nutrient requirements at various stages of production, and intense studies on the use of various antibiotics for young and growing swine. His research efforts were conducted at their peak when he was appointed chairman of the Animal Science Department in 1956. He served as chairman from October 1956 to August 1966.

Hanson was a very popular chairman of the department largely due to his ability to encourage and guide young staff members, to make them believe in themselves, and to encourage excellence. Les was a gentleman and always behaved kindly. During his tenure as chairman, the department expanded greatly in both staff and accomplishments.

Hanson was selected by the American Society of Animal Production in 1955 to receive the American Feed Manufacturers Award for outstanding accomplishments in swine nutrition. He was selected as a USDA-FAS Cultural Exchange Delegate to the USSR in 1959; was named Distinguished Nutritionist by the Distiller's Research Council in 1964; was listed in *American Men of Science*, *Leaders in American Science*, and *Who's Who in America* in 1959; and was chosen for Honorary Member, Minnesota Swine Honor Roll, Minnesota Pork Producer's Association in 1962. In 1972, he was elected to the Minnesota Livestock Breeders Hall of Fame. He was also a member of the following professional and honorary societies: Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, Sigma Xi, and Phi Kappa Phi. He was a Fellow of the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

Hanson's career included a wide range of professional activities. He served on the Subcommittee on Feed Additives of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences and chaired the committee from 1959 to 1970. He also served as a member of the Committee on Animal Nutrition, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences from 1958 to 1970. He served on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Animal Science* from 1956 to 1959 and represented the American Society of Animal Science on the Ralston-Purina Fellowship Award Committee from 1958 to 1960. In 1960, Hanson was invited to participate in the Second International Symposium on Animal Nutrition in Madrid, Spain. He contributed to the 23rd edition of *Feeds and Feeding* and in 1966 was a participant in the Voice of America Forum Lectures in the Agricultural Series. He served on the Research Council of the American Dehydrators' Association, 1958-63; was consultant to the Ford Foundation in Chile, September through

November 1963; was consultant to Abbott Laboratories of North Chicago on animal husbandry research and livestock management, 1957-64; and in 1964 was a member of the USDA, Animal Husbandry Research Division Task Force Committee that reviewed all livestock research conducted by the USDA and the state agricultural experiment stations.

Hanson's good judgment and services were widely sought on many major committee assignments at the University of Minnesota, including the following: Editorial Committee, Minnesota Feed Service, 1951-67; Chairman, Planning Committee, Minnesota Nutrition Conference, 1952-54, 1961-63; Editorial Committee, Minnesota Farm and Home Science, 1955-58; Graduate School Group Committee for Agriculture, 1954-59, and chairman, 1957-59; Curriculum Self-Survey Committee, 1955-58; College Curriculum Committee, 1956-70; Faculty Senate 1954-57, 1963-66, 1967-70, and 1970-73; All University Faculty Consultative Committee, 1959-60; Senate Committee on Education, 1959-60; President's Ad Hoc Committee to study administrative organization of the Institute of Agriculture, 1962; Institute of Agriculture Ad Hoc Committee on International Program Development, 1962-64; University Space Allocation Committee, 1963-70; All University International Committees on Components of Economic and Social Development and Latin American Area Studies, 1964-65; Committee on International Agriculture, 1964-65; Advisory Committee on International Programs in Agriculture, 1965-70; Institute of Agriculture Honors Committee, 1964-67; Institute of Agriculture Graduate Professional Improvement Advisory Committee, 1964-67; Chairman, Department of Animal Science Committee on Undergraduate Teaching and Courses, 1966-70; Director of Graduate Studies in Animal Science, 1967-72; Chairman, Institute of Agriculture Long Range Planning, Task Force Committee on Animal Agriculture, 1967-68; University Council on Liberal Education, 1967-70; University Council on International Programs, 1967-70; and University Commission on Campus Demonstrations, 1967-68.

Hanson was author or coauthor of 26 publications that have appeared in scientific journals. In addition, he was author or coauthor of 56 abstracts that were presented at meetings of the American Society of Animal Science. He was author or coauthor of 47 abstracts and several experiment station publications included in the Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station Reports. In 97 research reports pertaining to swine nutrition and management of which he was senior author or coauthor, he provided evidence of some of his major contributions to the Minnesota swine industry. The 12 carefully prepared papers he presented at Minnesota Nutrition Conferences have benefited feed industry participants as well as other segments of the Minnesota livestock industry.

Hanson was elected vice-president of the American Society of Animal Science for 1961-62, president for 1962-63, director for 1963-64, and fellow in 1976. He

provided wise counsel and served as advisor or co-advisor to 13 students who earned Ph.D. degrees and 17 students earned M.S. degrees.

Hanson was a member of the following organizations: American Society of Animal Science, American Institute of Nutrition, American Association for Advancement of Science (Fellow), American Institute for Biological Sciences, American Association of University Pro-

fessors, Metric Association, Minnesota Academy of Science, American Civil Liberties Union, American Dairy Science Association, and American Scandinavian-Foundation (Associate).

Lester E. Hanson was a very uncommon teacher, researcher, and leader of animal agriculture proponents. His kind come along too seldom. He passed away on February 11, 1985, in St. Paul, MN.