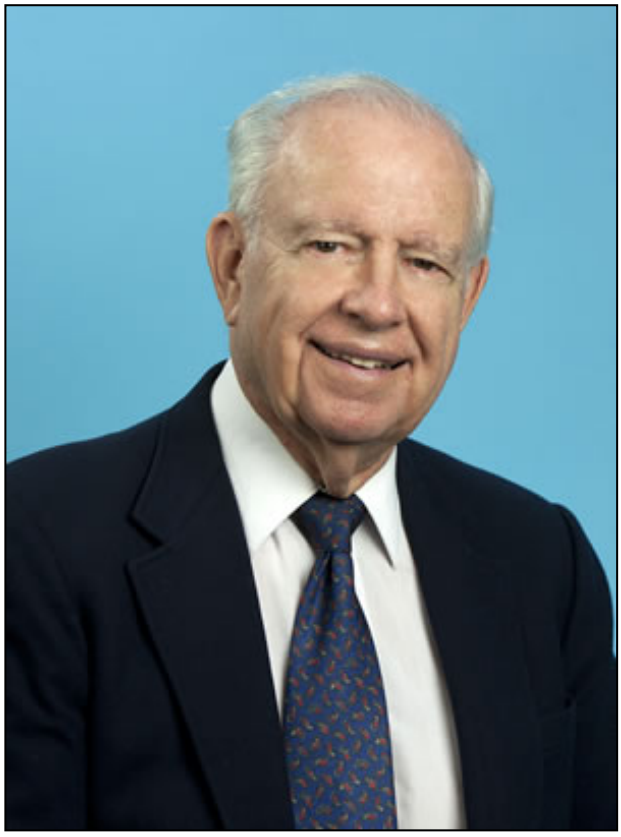
NEWS & EVENTS

CVM Alumnus to be Honored for Contributions to Agriculture

MU College of Veterinary Medicine alumnus Dr. Paul Nicoletti has been named to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame. The organization honors men and women for their lasting contributions to Florida agriculture and for mentoring youth. He and his fellow 2013 inductees, Dan Botts of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, former Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, and Dr. Eugene Trotter, founder of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, will be honored during a banquet Feb. 12. 2013.



Dr. Nicoletti was born in 1932 in Goodman, Mo., and grew up on a small dairy farm. He graduated from the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine in 1956. In 1962, he earned a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin, where he wrote his thesis on brucellosis.

He spent the bulk of his career with the USDA and the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine. Nicoletti made a lasting contribution to Florida agriculture by improving the procedures used to control bovine brucellosis, or Bang's disease. He is an internationally recognized authority on bovine brucellosis, and his efforts led to the eventual eradication of the disease in Florida. Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that can affect humans as well as animals. In cattle the most common clinical sign is spontaneous abortion. In humans, symptoms include fevers, weakness, anemia, headaches, depression and muscle pain. Brucellosis is an occupational hazard for farm workers, slaughterhouse workers, and veterinarians, who might be exposed to infected animals.

"Dr. Nicoletti has had a long and distinguished career in veterinary medicine," said MU College of Veterinary Medicine Dean Neil C. Olson. "His scientific contributions have dramatically improved our understanding of public health threats and have improved food safety for all people. He truly is a credit to the College of Veterinary Medicine, to which he has remained a tireless champion and a loyal friend. I'm happy to congratulate him on this latest honor."

From 1962 to 1968, Nicoletti worked as a USDA regional epidemiologist in Albany, New York. In this capacity he began conducting field investigations of brucellosis. From 1968 to 1972, he served in Iran as an epizootiologist for the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. He then returned to the United States and his work as a regional epidemiologist with the USDA. In 1975 he was transferred to Gainesville, Fla., where his focus was once again brucellosis.

When Nicoletti began his work in Gainesville, the national brucellosis control program was a subject of controversy. The major elements of the program were vaccination of young cattle and slaughter of cattle that were positively identified for the disease by a blood test. Compliance was compulsory, and cattle owners were only partially compensated for their losses.

Nicoletti became convinced that current brucellosis protocols were wasteful and ineffective. His field studies in Florida led to modifications in the use of brucellosis vaccine, including the inoculation of adult cattle. Before Nicoletti's adult vaccination program began, cattle owners would have to wait years before calf hood vaccination would begin to help their herds. Adult vaccination made protection for entire herds possible within a matter of days. Nicoletti also improved the brucellosis blood test, making it more accurate. These changes resulted in an 80 percent reduction in cattle losses.

Nicoletti's leadership helped mitigate the economic toll of brucellosis on the Florida cattle industry. Even more important, his efforts led to improved food safety and better protection of human health.

In 1978 Nicoletti joined the faculty at the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine, where he taught courses in infectious diseases, epidemiology, public health, and food safety. He influenced many young veterinary students to consider careers in agriculture and public health. He retired from the University of Florida in 2003.

Nicoletti is a member of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners, the Florida Cattlemen's Association, and the American Association of Food Hygiene Veterinarians. He is a past president of the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, the Florida Veterinary Medical Association, the Alachua County Veterinary Medical Association, and Animal Disease Research Workers in the Southern States.

Over the course of his long and distinguished career, Nicoletti has received numerous awards and honors. He received the University of Missouri National Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award in 1987 and the MU College of Veterinary Medicine Alumni Association Alumnus of the Year award in 2000. In 1994 he was named Veterinarian of the Year by the Florida Veterinary Medical Association, and in 2003 he was presented with the Distinguished Service Award by the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine. His most prestigious award came in 2010 when he was recognized with the Meyer-Steele Gold Head Cane Award, the highest honor of the American Veterinary Epidemiology Society. This award recognizes scientists who have significantly advanced human health through the practice of veterinary epidemiology and public health.

Dr. Nicoletti has generously supported the MU College of Veterinary Medicine over the years. In 2001, he and his late wife, Earlene, endowed a scholarship for students, which is awarded annually. He has two grown daughters, Julie and Nancy.

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Last Update: October 9, 2012