



**The History of Dr. J. G. Lesure and his Veterinary Remedies**

Veterinary patent medicines have a rich history in America. This history closely mimics the Human patent medicine field. In fact, many times the farmer was encouraged to take the horse medicine or vice versa. Such sayings as “for man or beast” and “one for a man, two for a horse” grew out of this parallel

development. Prior to the 1880’s, remedies solely for animals were produced in limited volumes, primarily by local druggist or horsemen. Their distribution was also limited, mostly to the immediate local area. It was not until the late 1880’s that companies, producing solely veterinary remedies, started to develop

national advertising campaigns. From that point on, “name brand” veterinary remedies were available to every farmer and horseman, no matter how remote their village or crossroads. Dr. John G. Lesure started one of these founding veterinary companies. What follows is his history as we know it today.

John A. and Minnie (Mosher) Lesure were a farming family in Barnard, Vermont. On New Years Eve, 1845, a child was born. Little John G. Lesure was born, with brown hair, blue eyes, and was named after his father. John was raised on the farm and no doubt was exposed to farm animals from an early age. His family moved to Royalton, Vermont at some point in his childhood. No other early history has been found until John became involved in the national crisis that would be known as the Civil War.



By 1864, the Northern Army was having trouble refilling its ranks of volunteers. There was no national draft of young men, so the Government resorted to a bounty paid to men who would enlist. On August 18, 1864, in Royalton, John claimed a bounty of \$100 and volunteered as a soldier in the United States Army. John was 18 years old, listed as 5' 6" tall and gave his occupation as farmer. He was still considered a minor. His father had to sign a consent form in order to complete the enlistment. John's period of service was to be a maximum of one year. John received \$33.33 when he enlisted, \$33.33 on December 31, 1864, and the final payment of \$33.33 when he mustered out of service on June 1, 1865.

John found himself a private assigned to Company G, 8th Vermont Infantry. The 8th Vermont was a part of the Army of the Shenandoah in northern Virginia. John participated in battles at Winchester, Cedar Creek, and Fishers Hill, Virginia. His military career was undistinguished and as the war ended, he was mustered out of service on June 1, 1865, in Washington, D.C.

With his military service out of the way, John returned to Royalton, Vermont to work as a blacksmith and farrier. After a few years, he expanded his business to include a livery stable. His livery business expanded and John continued in this line for fourteen years. It was in these years, working with an experienced veterinarian, that John started to develop a reputation for his work with, and treatment of, horses. He developed a line of cures and remedies which soon had a large following in the countryside. His use of the title Doctor started during these years. The title was the result of "hands on" experience and not a traditional university education.



Personal leather rifle cap box carried by J. G. Lesure during the Civil War. The numeral 8 is the metal ensignia from his kepi worn during the war.



Dr. Lesure and family c1900 at home in Keene New Hampshire.  
(Courtesy B. Smith Collection)

It must be noted that formal veterinary medical education was minimal in the United States at that time. During the 1880-90's, anyone could call themselves a Veterinary Surgeon and go to work. There were few veterinary colleges during this era and less regulation. Most young men who came into the profession were farm boys who developed their skills with hands on experience. Some, as John Lesure did, apprenticed with a veterinary surgeon and learned their art that way. Most country folk were impressed with an elaborate diploma and if need be, one could easily be obtained from a variety of mail order "veterinary colleges." In reality, if people employed you as a veterinarian and bought your medicines, you were a veterinarian, regardless of your education.

In 1885, at the age of 39, Dr. John G. Lesure moved to Keene, New Hampshire. He opened a laboratory, at 144 Winchester Street, to produce his medicines. The doctor's company claimed to have the first full line of veterinary medicines available throughout America. His remedies were on the market several years before such competitors as Dr. A. C. Daniels of Boston and Dr. Claris of Buffalo, New York. He shipped his remedies throughout the United States, selling in country stores, pharmacies, and harness shops. He also had three traveling wagons which sold door to door in New York and the rest of New England.

Dr. Lesure used his full promotional knowledge to come up with some of the most inventive names in the field of Veterinary patent medicine. His medicines included All Healing Balm Liniment, Total Eclipse Spavin Cure, Electric Hoof Ointment, and Worm Annihilator. As with most patent medicine companies, he filled his advertising with testimonials of sure cures. His products "cured" such exotic sounding diseases as black water, heaves, spavin, garget, and sweeney.

Dr. John G. Lesure died on February 11, 1901 at the age of 55 and was buried



Country store, tin front cabinet used to sell Dr. Lesure Remedies.





Dr. J. G. Lesure's grave and monument in Keene, New Hampshire.



Promotional booklet with paper cover for Dr. Lesure's Famous Remedies. Image of horse is very similar to the image on the display cabinet.



Promotional booklet from Dr. Lesure. This example is stamped on the bottom as having been given away by the J. N. Weber & Sons Company.



Cardboard sign for Dr. Lesure's Spavin Cure and All-Healing Balm Liniment. Advertising posters and signs from this company are very scarce.

in Keene, New Hampshire. At the time, he had built the company up to one of the largest and best known veterinary patent medicine manufacturers in the United States. His company continued in the hands of his family and operated into the 1930's. As late as the 1920's, the company still advertised for the farmer to write to Dr. Lesure about their animal problems. "Dr. Lesure" would send a written reply recommending a solution to their problems using Dr. Lesure medicines. No one advertised the fact that the "real" Dr. Lesure had died nearly 20 years before.

The Lesure company changes hands sometime in the 1930's. J. N. Weber of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania had been one of Dr. Lesure's major distributors in the Northeast. Undocumented history has it that Dr. Lesure's daughter married one of Mr. Weber's sons. Later medicine packaging and advertising confirm that Weber & Son's took over production and distribution of Dr. Lesure Veterinary Remedies. It is unknown at this time, how long the Weber Company remained in business.

Today, Dr. Lesure advertising and medicines are highly collectible. Perhaps the best known item is the "horse in a porthole" tin fronted display cabinet. These cabinets sat on the counter of country stores and apothecaries, making

the medicines available to every farmer and horseman. You might also find, in addition to his remedies; booklets, a celluloid hand mirror, postal covers, letterhead, wooden shipping crates, and glass front display cabinets.

If anyone has additional information on the Weber business in Harrisburg or would like additional information on veterinary patent medicines, please contact me at: [Petvet@mindspring.com](mailto:Petvet@mindspring.com)

Bottles, from left to right, beginning with top row: (1) All Healing Balm Liniment with box. Embossed: DR. LESURE'S / ALL-HEALING / BALM LINIMENT / 8 OZ CAP. (2) Bottle and box embossed: DR. LESURE'S / VETERINARY / FEVER DROPS. (3) Bottle and box embossed: DR. LESURE'S VETERINARY / COUGH & TONIC DROPS. (4) Special Liniment bottle and box. Embossed: DR. LESURE'S / LINIMENT / KEENE, N. H. / 6 OZ CAP. (5) Label only Total Eclipse Spavin Cure bottle and box. Label only bottle and box. (6) Weber's Famous Distemper & Heave Remedy. Produced by J. N. Weber & Sons, sole proprietor and manufacturer, 160 Sylvan Terrace, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This medicine was produced before the company took over Dr. Lesure's name in the 1930's.