



## Magnus Nordkvist Sweden's first reindeer veterinary surgeon

Magnus Nordkvist, who died on 26th June 1997 aged 73 years, was born on 19th September 1923 at Skara in southern Sweden. In 1945, after graduating from Skara high school, he matriculated at the Royal Veterinary College, Stockholm, from where, in turn, he graduated in 1955. Already before this, as a student, he was employed for a time at the College's Department of Ruminant Medicine besides which he had been temporarily engaged as veterinary practitioner in several different parts of the Sweden. Upon graduation he accepted a position at the National Veterinary Institute (Statens Veterinärmedicinska Anstalt) in Uppsala where from 1971 until his retirement in 1988 he was Government Veterinary Officer with special responsibility for reindeer diseases.

Though chiefly remembered as a pioneer in this branch of reindeer husbandry science, Nordkvist's interests were wide ranging. He worked hard to build links between reindeer herders and scientists in different biological disciplines both in Sweden and throughout the Nordic countries.

Nordkvist was a champion of the importance of research for improving reindeer husbandry. He used his sober manners and his mild voice – 'soft as a summer evening's breeze' it was once said – to great effect in increasing reindeer research in Sweden. His own work concentrated on the pathology of several important parasites, notably the warble fly (*Oedemagena tarandi*), the nasal bot fly (*Cephenemyia trompe*) and the brain worm (*Elaphostrongylus tarandi*). His desire to achieve results that would yield concrete benefits for reindeer husbandry is reflected in the fact that Ivomec was registered in Sweden for use on reindeer before it was registered for any other species of domestic mammal.

Nordkvist's scientific production (bibliography: *Rangifer* Special Issue No. 4, 1990: 6–9) reflected the breadth of his interests and his ability to work with scientists in many different disciplines. He was a tireless supervisor and a loyal colleague. He took great trouble with young scientists who wished to work with reindeer and he was eager that people who worked within reindeer husbandry – reindeer herders and agricultural advisers – should benefit from the results of research: consequently, he was a keen advocate of popular science.

Reindeer husbandry underwent large changes during his time as a reindeer veterinarian. Nordkvist watched the process of mechanisation and rationalisation and the change from subsistence to market economy and devoted considerable time to ameliorating some of the undesirable aspects of these developments. He was widely respected by herders and scientists alike. His popularity was due in large part to his pleasant manner, his gentle humour and his genuine concern for people around him. His popular lectures from the period 1969-1977, some of which were published in the SVA house journal, demonstrate his fine style and contain pearls of his subtle wit.

Magnus Nordkvist's career was clouded by two events. He considered the closure of the reindeer unit at the SVA shortly after his retirement a personal defeat. He also regretted that he was unable to carry on analysis of material he had collected with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency during a large investigation of calf mortality in Umbyn reindeer area. The preliminary results seemed to show that predators took principally strong animals and not, as was widely supposed, only the weak ones. Several years after retiring he attempted to resume the analysis but illness prevented him from completing the work.

Those of us who knew Magnus Nordkvist as a colleague at SVA, as a companion in field expeditions, or as a fellow scientist will deeply miss a friend with an unusually warm personality and a rich sense of humour.

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