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Handbook of Biological Data

THE American Institute of Biological Sciences, associated with the Division of Biology and Agriculture of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, is, through its Handbook Committee, preparing a *Handbook of Biological Data*. The book is intended to serve the biologist in much the same manner that the *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* and the *Handbook of Chemistry* serve the physical scientist.

The purpose of the *Handbook* is to present basic tabular data, both quantitative and descriptive, in the various biological sciences for easy reference by students, teachers, practitioners, and research workers. Although the book is primarily intended for biologists who are seeking information outside their field of specialization, the tables represent authoritatively evaluated data of the highest reliability available in the field.

At the present time the book is being prepared in fascicles, or sections, the first of which, "Standard Values in Blood," has been published by the Air Force as a Technical Report and also by the W. B. Saunders Company (1952). All royalties are set aside for future revisions. This section has met with enthusiastic acclaim. It is expected that the second fascicle, "Standard Values in Nutrition and Metabolism," will be published before the end of this year. This section will contain tables on daily nutrient allowances for man and farm animals that represent the latest revisions of the recommendations of the National Research Council; these revisions will probably not be published by the NRC until 1954, but permission has been obtained to have them appear in the *Handbook* prior to that time. Similar tables will be published for laboratory vertebrates and other animal forms, along with diets that supply the nutrients recommended. There will be data on: basic nutrient requirements and utilization,

covering many plant forms; diagrams representing pathways of metabolism; culture media for plants, bacteria, fungi, and algae; metabolic end products; and data on energy metabolism.

Preliminary drafts of two other fascicles, "Standard Values in Growth, Reproduction and Life Histories" and "Standard Values in Performances" (animal and plant physiology), have been completed, and it is hoped that both of these will be in print before the end of 1954. Work is also in progress on a fascicle on biochemical composition. It is planned that within the next two years the first four or five fascicles will be condensed and combined into a one-volume handbook, which will also include data drawn from other fields of biology.

It is the policy of the *Handbook* to present only what is established fact and avoid the borderline or questionable. Data to be presented are contributed by experts in the various fields of biology, and the tables are assembled by the editorial staff of the *Handbook*. Each table is then reviewed and authenticated by other experts in the field. The objective is that each value and each statement published shall represent the consensus of expert judgment in the domain of the table. The quantitative data are supplemented, in many cases, with footnotes or headnotes, or both. The contents are indexed and contain an extensive bibliography which employs a special coordinate system that identifies the contributor for each value, and its source in the literature.

Thousands of scientists in this country and all over the world have given most generously of their time as advisors, contributors, and reviewers. It is the belief of the Committee that the fascicles and final *Handbook* will justify the efforts of the many individuals who have cooperated so unselfishly toward the success of the project.

T. C. BYERLY

Chairman, The Handbook Committee

SCIENCE, founded in 1880, is published each Friday by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at the Business Press, 10 McGovern Ave., Lancaster, Pa. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Lancaster, Pa., January 13, 1948, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at the special rate postage provided for in the Act of February 28, 1925, embodied in Paragraph (d-2) Section 34.40 P. L. & R. of 1948.

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Annual subscriptions, \$7.50; single copies, \$.25; foreign postage, outside the Pan-American Union, \$1.00; Canadian postage, \$.50. Special rates to members of the AAAS.

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