

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Obituary of Professor Ing. Karel Veverka, DrSc. (1943–2021)

KAREL VEVERKA was born on March 18, 1943 in Ostrovačice near Brno into a farming family. His parents farmed 10 hectares. In 1965, he graduated from the University of Agriculture in Brno (today's Mendel University). After completing one year of obligatory, full-time military service, he worked as an agronomist at an agricultural cooperative in Kralice until 1968. Two years of practice as a manager of a large-scale farm operation gave him invaluable experience, shaping his lifelong approach to agriculture and plant protection. Then he worked briefly as a soil scientist in an expeditionary group for soil research at Rosice near Brno. In 1969, he began his CSc. (Ph.D.) studies at today's Crop Research Institute in Prague-Ruzyně. Under the stimulating encouragement of his supervisor and institute director, Dr. Jaroslav Zakopal, he studied damping-off of sugar beet seedlings and general problems of soil-borne pathogenic fungi, receiving a scholarship there for 3 years. During his doctoral studies, he also completed a postgraduate course in mycology at the Faculty of Science, Charles University in Prague.



Professor Veverka defended his doctoral dissertation on root rots of sugar beet seedlings in 1975. Then he focused on plant-protection methods related to the use of pesticides. Together with weed scientists from the Crop Research Institute in Prague-Ruzyně, he studied the simultaneous application of herbicides and fungicides, especially in spring barley. In 1980, he was promoted to be head of the Department of Weed Science and Phytopharmacy within the Section of Plant Protection, later to become the Department of Phytopharmacy (1987). He also dealt with the serious problems of loss of pesticide effectiveness and fungal resistance to systemic fungicides, innovations in pesticide-application methods, the side-effects of herbicides on barley powdery mildew, and the potential for using UAN (equimolar solution of urea and ammonium nitrate) as a spray additive and pesticide carrier. Results of his studies were summarized in his Ph.D. thesis on biological principles for rational pesticide application. In 1991, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science (DrSc.) of Agriculture and Forestry by Mendel University in Brno. He headed the Department of Integrated Plant Protection at the Crop Research Institute in Prague in the years 1993–1997. Then he became head of the Laboratory of Integrated Protection, part of the Department of Mycology. Since 1998, his lab has been working on an extensive project entitled Integrated Sunflower Protection. It was a new topic, which had not been addressed in the Czech Republic until that time. During their work, the research team conducted careful surveys of the occurrence and importance of individual sunflower diseases and pests. Several diseases were identified that had not been described in our country before. The team's collaboration with the Central Institute of Supervising and Testing in Agriculture (ÚKZÚZ) in Brno facilitated a focus on sunflower hybrids in state trials and their reaction to fungal diseases under controlled inoculation. Karel Veverka worked at the Crop Research Institute in Prague-Ruzyně for more than 40 years (until 2011). After that, he kept in touch as an emeritus worker.

In addition to his research work, Karel applied his broad knowledge and experience in plant protection to teaching at Mendel University in Brno, where he headed the Plant Protection Department starting

in 1997. With his undergraduate and Ph.D. students, he continued research on his former scientific interests: damping-off diseases, mixtures of liquid fertilizers with pesticides, and fungal diseases of sunflower. In 1998, he became an associate professor and, in 1999, a professor of plant protection at Mendel University. His introduction of specialized studies on plant protection into the curriculum there deserve special recognition. While on the faculty, he actively participated in the reorganization of the university, aiming at compatibility with western European universities and the preparation of a new bachelor's and master's program of study in Plant Medicine, which began in 2003.

Professor Veverka always maintained good relations with a diverse cadre of colleagues abroad, particularly in Germany. He became a Corresponding Member of the German Phytomedical Society. He was also known for his long-term research collaborations and organization of joint activities with Slovak colleagues. In 2000, his department organized the 16th Czech and Slovak Plant Protection Conference with more than 250 Czech and foreign participants. He was a member of four scientific councils, the Editorial Board of the journal "Plant Protection Science," and several organizations, including the Czech Society for Plant Pathology, the Czech Scientific Society for Mycology, and the Czech Phytosanitary Society.

He was an important figure in Czech agricultural phytopathology at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. His long, diverse experiences in the field of plant protection, combined with his excellent public speaking skills, led him to be recognized as one of the erudite experts of his time. His skillful presentations were widely appreciated at scientific conferences and seminars and at university lectures for students. All his scientific life, he kept contacts in the broader world of agricultural production, to which he was very close due to his personal experience. His expertise in chemical plant-protection products was unsurpassed. Beyond his own research and teaching activities, he always found time for the popularization of science. He published his achievements in both scientific journals and the popular-scientific press, being the author of numerous publications on plant protection, pesticides, the spread of fungal pathogens, diagnostics, and monitoring and epidemiology of phytopathogenic fungi.

Colleagues and friends of K. Veverka knew him not only as an enthusiastic scientist and devoted university teacher but also as a man deeply interested in photography, arts, literature, history, and classical music. Many of his colleagues asked him to take photos of scientific objects for their publications and research reports.

Karel Veverka was an outstanding personality, a very friendly and helpful man. He played the whole of life fairly, always ready to help others, to provide younger colleagues space and support for scientific growth and development. We will always remember him with respect and gratitude. He passed away on December 3, 2021.

Jana Palicová, Prague, Czech Republic

Iva Křížková, Prague, Czech Republic

Aleš Lebeda, Olomouc, Czech Republic