



# Veterinary Research News

## Legislative Actions

### NVMSA, FARAD part of billion-dollar funding bill

The veterinary profession has reason to cheer the \$410 billion spending bill President Barack Obama signed March 11.

Included in the fiscal 2009 omnibus legislation are millions of dollars for AVMA-backed programs, such as the National Veterinary Medical Service Act and Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank, as well as expenditures for veterinary education and several animal health initiatives.

The appropriations bill provides funding for nine federal departments. Some agencies saw increases of as much as 10 percent or more above fiscal 2008 appropriations.

Congress included \$2.95 million for NVMSA—the AVMA's highest funding priority. In exchange for a commitment to work in underserved areas of veterinary medicine, recipients are granted student loan repayment. The bill was signed into law in 2003, but its implementation has been delayed by the Agriculture Department, which is still in the process of promulgating regulations for the program.

"More than five years after the legislation was passed by Congress, it looks like all the pieces are finally coming together for NVMSA," commented AVMA CEO W. Ron DeHaven. "With this funding, and implementing regulations expected soon from the USDA, it looks like this important program will become functional soon."

FARAD, a program until recently on the brink of extinction because of insufficient funding, received a desperately needed \$806,000 appropriation. A number of organizations including the AVMA had donated more than \$16,000 to keep the program running in the short term, but a major cash infusion was needed.

"I am very relieved because we were basically going to have to shut FARAD forever by the end of summer," said Dr. Alistair Webb, one of the pro-

gram's three directors and a professor at the University of Florida-Gainesville.

The money will keep FARAD going for another year without additional layoffs, Dr. Webb explained.

Also in the omnibus bill was a \$2.95 million boost to Section 1433 Formula Funds, which support research on diseases in food animals at the nation's veterinary colleges and veterinary science departments.

The Department of Agriculture's National Animal Identification System, which the AVMA believes is necessary, received \$14.5 million to cover the costs of administration, implementation, and information technology infrastructure development.

Additionally, Congress appropriated \$1.2 billion to the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; \$1.1 billion to the USDA Agricultural Research Service; \$129.2 million to the USDA Animal Health Monitoring and Surveillance program; \$5.9 million to the USDA aquaculture program; \$560,000 to the USDA Animal Welfare Information Center; \$116.5 million to the Food and Drug Administration Animal Drugs and Feed program; and \$429,000 to the FDA NRSP-7 Minor Use Animal Drug program.

Tuberculosis eradication and Johne's disease research received \$15.6 million and \$6.8 million, respectively.

## From the AVMA

### Audin, Matushek named to new positions in Publications Division

On March 23, AVMA Executive Vice President W. Ron DeHaven named Dr. Janis H. Audin as editor-in-chief emeritus of the Publications Division.

Dr. Audin served as editor-in-chief and director of the Publications Division since April 15, 1995. She joined the staff in 1985 as an assistant editor and was promoted to associate editor in 1989 and editor in 1994. She received her DVM degree from the University of Illinois in 1979.

This is the first time the AVMA has conferred this title of distinction.

It also means that Dr. Audin will continue contributing to the staff effort to ensure the high quality of the AVMA scientific journals.

The Association will begin a comprehensive search for Dr. Audin's successor. Associate Editor Kurt J. Matushek has been appointed interim division director and interim editor-in-chief. Dr. Matushek joined the Publications Division on Dec. 1, 1992, as an assistant editor. He was promoted to associate editor Jan. 1, 1997. A 1983 graduate of the University of Illinois, he is board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Surgeons.

## The Veterinary Community

### 'Ambitious' strategic plan unveiled by AAVMC

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges rolled out its strategic goals and objectives and launched the North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium at its 2009 annual meeting, March 12–16 in Washington, D.C.

AAVMC President James G. Fox kicked off the meeting's opening plenary session March 14 to 135 deans, college officials, department heads, faculty, and veterinary medical education stakeholders.

He called the association's strategic plan—the first in its 43-year history—an ambitious one. The plan presents the AAVMC's vision, mission, and values, in addition to six goals that will determine the association's priorities and allocation of resources over the next five years. They are as follows:

- reviewing, evaluating, and improving veterinary medical education
- increasing the amount of veterinary research conducted
- recruiting a student body aligned with the demands for veterinary expertise
- increasing the number of racially and/or ethnically underrepresented individuals in veterinary medicine
- developing the next generation of leaders for academic veterinary medicine

- strengthening the association's capacity to advance its mission

To see the full document, go to [www.aavmc.org/documents/AAVMC-StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.aavmc.org/documents/AAVMC-StrategicPlan.pdf).

Dr. Marguerite Pappaioanou, AAVMC executive director, said the main achievement in developing the plan was to show that the association understands the challenges member institutions are facing.

The plan is built in part on the findings of the AAVMC-sponsored Foresight Report. Released in early 2007, the report addresses how veterinary medical education must adapt in preparing veterinarians to respond to the future needs of society.

The AAVMC is reaching out to its members to receive feedback on the strategic plan and is developing an implementation plan.

Shaping the future of veterinary medical education has emerged as the AAVMC's top priority in its new strategic plan.

The plan's first objective, "Develop a plan to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of veterinary medical education to meet societal needs," will be addressed in part through the activities of the newly formed North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium.

NAVMEC will chart the course for the future of veterinary medical education. It will happen through a series of national discussions aimed at reaching a shared understanding of competencies required of veterinarians to meet societal need. A spectrum of educational models will be explored along with the relationship between education, accreditation, and licensure. Partners of the consortium include the AVMA, academia, national and state VMAs, industry, multiple veterinary specialty groups, state licensure boards, and government, among others. The anticipated outcome of these discussions will be a national, flexible, coordinated plan for veterinary education.

During the first half of 2009, AAVMC with its NAVMEC partners and co-sponsors will form a steering committee, which will develop in more detail the consortiums' scope, goals, objectives, activities, and outcomes, Dr. Pappaioanou said. The first meeting of the steering committee is anticipated for late summer or early fall 2009.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, the consortium will focus discussions on many important questions for future veterinary medical education, including the following:

- What is meant by meeting societal needs, and what knowledge, skills, and competencies should all new graduates of veterinary medical colleges possess at graduation to ensure societal needs are met?
- What are different educational models that will prepare all new graduates to meet societal needs?
- What are essential principles and relationships between colleges, accreditation, and licensure that will ensure that new graduates meet societal needs?

The AAVMC is hoping for some sort of "blueprint," Dr. Pappaioanou said, that would be open and nonprescriptive for colleges.

Relative to the first question, one critical issue likely to be discussed by the NAVMEC is prerequisite standards for the 28 U.S. veterinary schools and colleges.

As it stands now, each veterinary college has its own set of prerequisites. They have become so varied that it creates challenges for students to prepare their applications, said John E. Roane Jr., chief operating officer of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and Veterinary Medical College Application Service director.

Students, on average, apply to 3.8 veterinary colleges. When applying to multiple colleges, applicants have a greater burden ensuring that their preparatory work is consistent with each school, Roane said.

The issue has come up for years, he said, so the AAVMC launched a national recruitment strategy survey a few years ago in conjunction with professional enrollment consultants Stamats Inc.

Feedback from advisers and students provided to the AAVMC indicated what the association had suspected—prerequisites were too varied and difficult to navigate. They said it was easier to apply to the 125 U.S. medical schools than the 28 U.S. veterinary schools, according to the feedback.

To make progress on the issue, Dr. Pappaioanou said everyone involved—

from deans to admissions counselors—must examine what knowledge, skills, and competencies veterinary college graduates must have at the time of graduation; what can be accomplished prior to veterinary college versus during; and how veterinary colleges can assess graduates to determine how well they've done.

The issue was discussed at length during the admissions officers and directors workshop at the AAVMC annual meeting March 14. Attendees recommended the creation of core prerequisites for all U.S. veterinary colleges. Instead of working to standardize all veterinary colleges' prerequisites, Roane said, efforts should focus on creating a common set of core prerequisites to make it easier for students to apply.

### **Foundation to support pharmacology research**

The American Academy of Veterinary Pharmacology and Therapeutics has contributed start-up funds for the Veterinary Pharmacology Research Foundation.

The foundation will provide grants to support research on drugs for companion and food animals, projects to ensure the safety of products from food animals that have received drugs, and training programs for veterinary pharmacologists.

The AAVPT provided an initial installment of \$10,000 for the foundation fund and pledged 10 percent of the association's cash reserves for each of the next five years. The foundation will seek additional funding from other organizations, veterinarians, pharmaceutical companies, and the public. Research funds will be available through a competitive grant process, with the foundation issuing a call for proposals as early as this fall.

The members of the foundation's board are Drs. Jane G. Owens, Indianapolis, *president*; Daniel A. Gingerich, Lebanon, Ohio, *secretary/treasurer*; Anthony N. Lucas, Greenfield, Ind.; Mark G. Papich, Raleigh, N.C.; and Joe S. Gloyd, Wilmington, Del. Last year, the board completed the steps for the foundation to receive tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status.

### **Oklahoma State establishes parasitology center**

A recently established veterinary parasitology center at Oklahoma State University will conduct research, train

students, and provide specialized diagnostic services and consultation.

The National Center for Veterinary Parasitology, launched in late February, will be based in the university's Center for Veterinary Health Sciences in Stillwater.

Dr. Susan E. Little, a professor and endowed chair in OSU's veterinary parasitology program, said the parasitology center's work will be split among parasites in small and large animals, with specific research areas to be determined by an advisory board of parasitologists and veterinarians across the U.S. Areas of interest include emerging threats, novel diagnostic strategies, zoonotic parasites, and parasiticide resistance.

Two applied graduate and residency training positions are expected to be added each year for the program's first four years. New trainees will join the program as others graduate.

Three organizations have together donated \$600,000 for the center. Novartis Animal Health and Bayer Animal Health each pledged \$250,000, and the Kirkpatrick Foundation pledged \$100,000.

### **Five microbiologists certified**

Five new diplomates were certified by the American College of Veterinary Microbiologists in 2008. Drs. April Johnson, Lafayette, Ind.; Won-Il Kim, Ames, Iowa; and David M. White, Decatur, Ga., were certified in virology. Drs. Orhan Sahin, Ames, Iowa, and Rebecca P. Wilkes, Maryville, Tenn., were certified in bacteriology/mycology.

Dr. X. J. Meng, Blacksburg, Va., was granted honorary diplomate status.

## **Regulatory Actions**

### **Rule requires veterinarians to have identity theft prevention programs**

Veterinarians are not exempt from a new federal rule to prevent identity theft. The Red Flags Rule, which the Federal Trade Commission will begin enforcing May 1, requires creditors to develop programs to prevent, detect, and mitigate identity theft.

The FTC proposed the Red Flags Rule in late 2007, and it took effect in 2008. The commission delayed enforcement until this year because many organizations did not consider themselves to be creditors—not in the same sense as financial institutions, which also fall under the rule.

Nevertheless, the rule applies to most organizations that make arrangements to defer payment of debts, including almost all health care providers. Health care providers are creditors under the rule, for example, if they bill clients after completing medical services.

The FTC has offered guidelines for creating identity theft prevention programs that satisfy the requirements of the Red Flags Rule.

The first step is for organizations to identify major warning signs of identity theft, or red flags, that they come across in their line of work. Categories of warning signs include alerts from consumer reporting agencies; suspicious documents, personal information, or account activity; and notices from customers, victims of identity theft, law enforcement authorities, or other entities.

Each organization must write, implement, and administer an ongoing program to detect warning signs and respond appropriately to prevent or mitigate identity theft after finding a red flag. Responses to warning signs could include monitoring accounts or changing account numbers.

Finally, organizations should update their programs periodically to reflect changes in identity theft risks.

The intent behind the Red Flags Rule is good, said Dr. Patricia Wohlferth-Bethke, an assistant director in the AVMA Membership and Field Services Division.

If a veterinarian does not prevent breeches in the security of clients' information, she noted, some clients may choose not to visit that veterinarian again. Also, according to the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics of the AVMA, veterinarians and their associates should protect the personal privacy of clients.

Veterinarians should protect the information of employees as well as clients, said Adrian Hochstadt, JD, assistant director for state legislative and regulatory affairs in the AVMA Communications Division. He added that the AVMA plans to offer webinars with an outside specialist, in the near future, to help veterinarians come into compliance with the specific requirements of the Red Flags Rule.

Additional information about how the rule applies to health care providers is available at [www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/articles/art11.shtm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/articles/art11.shtm).

### **DEA seeks options for disposal of controlled substances by users**

When veterinarians dispense controlled substances to clients, the clients have few legal methods to dispose of any remaining drugs later. The Drug Enforcement Administration is seeking additional methods for disposal of controlled substances by human patients and animal owners. The AVMA believes law enforcement agencies are the appropriate group to undertake the task.

The DEA has granted temporary permission for some pharmaceutical take-back programs by law enforcement agencies that have requested authorization. On Jan. 21, the DEA published a notice in the Federal Register requesting comments on additional options for the disposal of controlled substances by users.

According to the notice, the DEA is seeking disposal options that protect public health and safety, minimize the possibility of diversion, are consistent with existing federal laws and regulations, and provide sound environmental solutions.

Members of the AVMA Clinical Practitioners Advisory Committee, meeting Feb. 26-27, discussed a desire to support appropriate disposal methods. Nevertheless, the CPAC wishes to limit a potential burden on veterinarians—if the DEA were to task veterinarians to take back controlled substances they had dispensed previously, dispose of the drugs, and keep the accompanying records. The CPAC drafted a policy stating that the AVMA believes law enforcement agencies should dispose of controlled substances from users.

On March 10, in a special meeting, the AVMA Board of Governors approved the policy "Client Disposal of Controlled Substances" in time to submit comments to the DEA by the March 23 deadline. The letter to the DEA states that the AVMA supports appropriate disposal of controlled substances but wants to limit any unnecessary economic burden on veterinary practices, most of which are small businesses. The letter concludes that drug take-back programs are best left in the hands of law enforcement. ❧