



Veterinary Research News

Global News

Mexican veterinary school appealing COE decision

A Mexican veterinary school is appealing an adverse decision made by the AVMA Council on Education at its Feb. 28-March 2 meeting in Schaumburg, Ill.

Word of the appeal came within the required 30 days after the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia had been notified of the council's decision.

Accreditation decisions are confidential until they become final; however, an appeal is considered a matter of public record.

An appeal by a foreign veterinary school not already accredited by the COE can be interpreted two ways: the school was either denied initial accreditation and is petitioning for reconsideration or was granted limited accreditation and is petitioning for full.

Now that UNAM is petitioning for review, the school has 60 days from when it was notified of the adverse decision to submit information supporting its petition, according to the council's accreditation policies and procedures.

Meanwhile, the AVMA Executive Board will appoint a panel that will hold a hearing on the matter within 120 days after receipt of information supporting the petition.

The last time a veterinary school or college appealed a COE decision was in 2000, when the Western University of Health Sciences filed an appeal.

For more information on the appeals process, visit www.avma.org/education/cvea/coe_appeal_decisions.asp.

UNAM first expressed interest in COE accreditation in 1996. Since then it has been working to bring the school up to COE standards.

In spring 2006, the COE made a consultative site visit to Mexico City, and, afterward, laid out recommendations for UNAM to implement to work toward accreditation. The school sent a video more than a year later for the COE to view showcasing the completion of curriculum and facilities upgrades designed to meet conditions cited by COE officials in the 2006 consultative site visit report.

Additional interim reports provided by UNAM and reviewed by the COE resulted in the council granting a request from the college for a comprehensive site visit, which occurred in November 2009.

Recently, some have questioned whether the council should accredit foreign veterinary schools. Read the story "Speaking different languages" in the May 15 *JAVMA* News online at www.avma.org/onlnews/default.asp.

Nominations sought for PANVET position

The AVMA Executive Board approved the Committee on International Veterinary Affairs' recommendation to nominate an AVMA member for potential election to the Pan-American Association of Veterinary Sciences Directive Council.

PANVET membership includes veterinary associations in North America, Central America, and South America. The AVMA initially joined PANVET in the early 1970s, discontinued its membership in 1984, and rejoined the group in 2004 in recognition of the AVMA's commitment to international involvement in veterinary medicine.

The CIVA noted in its recommendation background that having a representative on PANVET's directive council would allow the AVMA to create stronger alliances among close neighbors on issues affecting not only AVMA members but also other veterinarians around the globe. Such issues with potential global impact include veterinary medical education standards, animal welfare standards, and assurance of food safety.

PANVET holds a congress every other year. Similar to the AVMA Annual Convention, its primary purpose is to provide continuing education. The most recent PANVET congress was held in October 2008 in Guadalajara, Mexico; the next Congress is scheduled for this September in Lima, Peru. For more information, visit www.panvet2010.org/index.html.

PANVET's Directive Council has responsibilities similar to those of the AVMA Executive Board. The council meets yearly, with members elected by PANVET to serve renewable two-year terms.

The AVMA is now calling for nominations for a candidate. The deadline

is June 15. The candidate will likely be selected at the July board meeting. For a nomination form and complete requirements for this position, visit www.avma.org/about_avma/governance/volunteering/vacancies.asp.

Emerging Pathogens Project to study evolution of zoonoses

The Field Museum and the University of Chicago have established the Emerging Pathogens Project to study the evolution of zoonotic pathogens.

The project's goal is to provide in-depth, baseline information on pathogens that appear in animals and could jump to people.

The Field Museum conducted its first field expedition in connection with the project last fall in Malawi, a developing country in southeast Africa with a rapidly growing population. The expedition yielded 1,100 mammal and bird specimens, including the pathogens that live in and on them.

Scientists at the Field Museum and University of Chicago will extract DNA from the animal specimens and the viruses, bacteria, parasites, and other pathogens that the animal specimens carry to create an extensive database of animal and pathogen biodiversity. The University of Chicago's Institute for Genomics and Systems Biology will spearhead efforts to identify high-risk pathogens for additional genetic studies.

From the AVMA

Board approves balanced budget, plan for animal welfare curriculum

The AVMA Executive Board met April 8-10 at Association headquarters in Schaumburg, Ill., where board members approved a balanced budget for 2011 in addition to measures relating to animal welfare and veterinary education.

The 2011 budget includes \$29.5 million in anticipated total revenue and a projected \$1.7 million surplus in revenue over expenses that would go into the AVMA reserve fund. Compared with the 2010 original budget, the 2011 projected budget anticipates \$865,889 more in expenses and \$2.6 million more in revenue, a result of the recent membership dues increase.

In addition, the budget includes \$417,500 in support for programs

from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation. These programs include, but are not limited to, support for the AVMA Veterinary Leadership Experience, animal welfare programs, disaster relief, the AVMA Congressional Science and Executive Branch Fellowships, and the annual convention.

Following are highlights from the April meeting. The board approved recommendations for the AVMA to:

- Lead a collaborative effort to develop a model curriculum for the study of animal welfare in veterinary education. The process entails having the Association host planning meetings composed of six to 10 subject experts, plus representatives of key stakeholder organizations, starting this year.
- Initiate an amendment to the AVMA Bylaws to grant voting rights to the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges' liaison representative to the AVMA Council on Education. The council had deemed this move appropriate, given the liaison's role on the COE.
- Revise three of the 11 AVMA COE Standards of Accreditation. The modifications clarify the entries on finances, physical facilities and equipment, and clinical resources in the council's Standard Requirements for an Accredited or Approved College of Veterinary Medicine. Changes in the latter two standards clarify a school's or college's ability to accommodate alternative educational models, such as distributive models of clinical education.
- Host a meeting of the International Accreditors Working Group in late 2010 or early 2011 at a cost of \$7,500. The group's primary job will be reviewing the joint accreditation site visit conducted by the AVMA Council on Education, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council this past October at Murdoch University Division of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences in Australia and discussing the potential for future joint accreditation site visits.
- Grant the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation provisional recognition as a recognized veterinary specialty organization.
- Accept a model bill and regulations designed to ensure appropriate care for dogs intended as pets. Some states have passed, and many more are considering, legislation regulating individuals who breed or retail dogs to address substandard facilities.

The AVMA is offering these documents as guidance and as an alternative to some of the bills being introduced around the country that it considers ill conceived.

- Revise a number of policies concerning the welfare of disabled livestock, cattle, swine, and layer chickens. The board also adopted a policy stating Tasers and other stun guns are not to be used on any animal for routine capture or restraint. These and other updated and new policies will be posted on the AVMA Web site (www.avma.org) under "Policy" under the Reference bar.
- Revise the AVMA Strategic Plan. The new version incorporates the Association's Diversity Plan as tactics under the existing strategic objectives, among other things. The revised plan will address the strategic activities of the AVMA for 2010-2011.

New tool to help students find externships

A student externship locator is now available from the AVMA.

Using the tool, which became available April 7, students can browse listings by state, college or university, interest area, and sponsoring organization.

Dr. Patricia L. Wohlferth-Bethke, assistant director of the AVMA Membership and Field Services Division, said students and AVMA volunteer leaders had requested a way to easily find externship opportunities, particularly because some veterinary colleges require externship participation.

"Finding adequate, quality positions has been difficult in the past, and this locator is a way to make the search easier," Dr. Wohlferth-Bethke said.

To use the student externship locator, go to www.avma.org/vcc/ and click on either the "Student Externship Locator" box on the right side of the screen or the link on the left side.

News Updates

USDA accepting applications for loan repayment program

A federal notice was published April 30 inviting applications for the Department of Agriculture's Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program, which will provide student loan debt relief for service in designated shortage areas across the United States.

Earlier in April, the AVMA applauded the Agriculture Department's National Institute of Food and Agriculture for publishing the final rule for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program.

The rule, published April 19 in the Federal Register, outlines criteria for

designating veterinary shortage situations and applicant eligibility for the loan repayment program. The program was authorized by the National Veterinary Medical Service Act to bring student debt relief to veterinarians who agree to practice in designated veterinary shortage situations.

Approximately \$9.6 million is available for NIFA to administer the program. Funding for future years will be based on annual appropriations and balances from prior years, and will likely vary from year to year.

Participants may receive up to \$25,000 in loan payments for each year of service, with a minimum of three years of service but no more than four. Applications will be accepted until June 30, with awards being offered by Sept. 30.

NIFA also released maps of state- and federally designated shortage areas on its Web site (www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/animals/in_focus/an_health_if_vmlrp.html), along with eligibility requirements, FAQs, and application forms.

AVMA leaders, who have spent the better part of the past decade championing the program and funding for it, were ecstatic that debt relief will soon be made available for veterinarians working in underserved areas.

The AVMA anticipates that a large number of veterinarians will apply for the program. Some factors contributing to what is expected to be a robust applicant pool are a struggling U.S. economy and pent-up demand for the program by veterinary graduates who have patiently awaited action by the USDA.

Additionally, the rising cost of a veterinary education has forced students to borrow increasing amounts in the form of student loans, resulting in higher educational indebtedness at graduation. In 2009, the mean debt for graduating students who incurred debt was \$129,976, while the mean starting salary for private practice veterinarians was \$65,185, according to the AVMA.

There also continues to be a great need for more veterinarians across the country. Approximately 1,300 counties have fewer than one food supply veterinarian per 25,000 farm animals, and there are 500 counties with at least 5,000 farm animals that have no food supply veterinarians to treat them, according to the AVMA.

The complete rule is available on the U.S. Government Printing Office Web site, www.gpoaccess.gov.

USDA completes construction at National Centers for Animal Health

The Department of Agriculture dedicated a new laboratory building in late April as the final component of the National Centers for Animal

Health, marking the end of a decade-long modernization project.

The NCAH consolidates three USDA units that already had headquarters in Ames, Iowa—the National Animal Disease Center, National Veterinary Services Laboratories, and Center for Veterinary Biologics. The AVMA strongly supported updating the units.

“The new NCAH will help create jobs and economic opportunity in America’s rural communities by supporting livestock producers across the country,” said Tom Vilsack, U.S. agriculture secretary. “This new facility will not only save taxpayers money, but will help the men and women who work here in Ames provide the critical advancements needed to maintain the success of the industry.”

The National Animal Disease Center conducts research on diseases of economic importance to the livestock and poultry industries. The National Veterinary Services Laboratories operate diagnostic bacteriology and virology laboratories as well as a pathobiology laboratory at Ames. The Center for Veterinary Biologics tests vaccines and other biologics and inspects plants that manufacture biologics.

The \$460 million, multiple-phase project to modernize the NCAH included construction of new laboratories and high- and low-containment housing for large animals. The AVMA supports an increase in operational funding for the NCAH to cover the increase in operational costs.

Pfizer, AVMF scholarship winners revealed

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation announced May 5 the inaugural class of Pfizer Veterinary Student Scholars.

Pfizer Animal Health will provide up to \$2 million in scholarships, administered in partnership with the Foundation, over the first three years of the program (see *AJVR*, November 2009, page 1310).

This year, 222 second- and third-year students representing all 28 U.S. schools and colleges of veterinary medicine will cumulatively receive \$555,000, or \$2,500 individually.

The student scholars were selected on the basis of several criteria, including academic excellence, leadership, and potential for contributing to food animal or food safety veterinary medicine.

The Department of Agriculture currently anticipates that demand for food animal veterinarians will increase 12 percent to 13 percent by 2016. According to a 2009 AVMA survey, mean debt for veterinary students who graduated with educational debt in 2009 was \$129,976, whereas mean starting salary for graduates entering private veterinary practice was \$65,185.

The initiative is meant to demonstrate the two entities’ support for veterinary education and encourage more students to be large animal veterinarians.

For a list of this year’s scholarship recipients, visit www.avmf.org/pfizerscholarshipwinners

Research in Progress

Researchers closer to malignant catarrhal fever vaccine

Federal and university researchers recently identified the life cycle of a virus that infects sheep, cattle, and bison; the discovery is expected to aid vaccine development.

The virus responsible for malignant catarrhal fever targets various cell types at different life stages, preventing researchers from growing the virus in cell culture and, thus, hindering vaccine development, according to an article in the April edition of *Agricultural Research*. The magazine is published by the Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service.

The studies were conducted by researchers with the USDA-ARS, Washington State University, and the University of Wyoming.

In sheep, the virus enters through nasal passages, reaches the lungs, and replicates, ARS information states. The virus next targets lymphocytes and circulates through the animal, then targets cells in the nasal turbinates, and finally is shed through nasal secretions. The virus is typically spread from sheep to cattle and bison, the article states.

To read more about the research, go to www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/.

The Veterinary Community

WSU professor named to ambassadorship

A Washington State University faculty member known for his dedication to international veterinary medicine has been selected as a Fulbright ambassador.

Dr. Mushtaq A. Memon, associate professor in WSU’s Veterinary Clinical Sciences Department and the School for Global Animal Health, is the first veterinarian selected for such a position.

Dr. Memon was a Fulbright scholar in the Sultanate of Oman from 2006-2007. He is among a select group of 29 Fulbright alumni to become ambassadors for the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, which administers the Fulbright Scholar Program in collaboration with the U.S. State Department.

The program, now in its second

year, invites Fulbright scholar alumni to serve as representatives at campus workshops and academic conferences across the U.S. for two years. These ambassadors are helping to expand Fulbright’s outreach efforts to the higher education community. Anywhere from 12 to 18 ambassadors are chosen each year.

Dr. Memon, a clinician scientist who specializes in animal reproduction, is an internationally recognized scholar who recently joined the WSU School for Global Animal Health. He also leads the WSU International Veterinary Education Program, which enhances veterinary students’ understanding of global animal health issues.

Charities, pets to benefit from awareness campaign

An online survey is giving seven worthy charities, including the American Veterinary Medical Foundation, a chance to win \$25,000 to benefit pets.

Novartis Animal Health is sponsoring the Million Dog Search campaign to raise awareness of canine osteoarthritis.

At the campaign’s Web site, www.milliondogsearch.com, participants complete a five-question checklist to learn some of the signs of arthritis and find out whether their dogs are at risk. An e-mail address is requested at the end.

Every person who fills out the survey has a chance to choose one of seven charities, among them the AVMF, to receive a \$1 donation from Novartis.

The campaign began April 1 and runs through Nov. 30.

Each charity that reaches 5,000 checklists/supporters will receive \$5,000. The organization with the most checklists completed at the end will receive an additional \$20,000.

Canine osteoarthritis affects 14 million dogs every year, but only 1.4 million dogs are currently receiving treatment, according to the site.

Funding Announced

Winn Feline Foundation awards grants

The Winn Feline Foundation has awarded grants totaling \$183,391 to 16 research projects to improve feline health.

One project received a grant through the Ricky Fund for Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, and four projects received grants through the Bria Fund for Feline Infectious Peritonitis.

The Winn Feline Foundation also awarded grants to two projects relevant to analgesia, two projects relevant to genetics, and three projects relevant to squamous cell carcinoma. Other projects that received funding relate to probiotics, acromegaly, obesity, and lymphoma. ☛



Dr. Mushtaq A. Memon