

# Veterinary Research News

## AVMA

### Animal welfare recognized as veterinary specialty

The AVMA Executive Board vote granting the American College of Animal Welfare provisional recognition clears the way for prospective members to become diplomates of the nation's newest veterinary specialty organization.

The Aug. 1 vote was the culmination of an approximately seven-year journey that in recent months saw the AVMA Board of Governors overturn an AVMA Council on Education decision opposing recognition of the American College of Animal Welfare.

ACAW is only the fourth organization in the world that certifies animal welfare specialists. The other entities are in the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia-New Zealand.

The scientific study of animal welfare has grown exponentially in the past two decades, causing the field to evolve into a distinct discipline within veterinary medicine, according to Dr. Bonnie V. Beaver, a member of ACAW's organizing committee and former AVMA president. ACAW diplomates will have received advanced training in all aspects of animal welfare science, including ethics, so they can offer the public, general veterinary practitioners, and other stakeholders accurate information and advice.



American College of Animal Welfare representatives initially submitted a letter of intent to the American Board of Veterinary Specialties in 2006. After subsequent steps that included ACAW submitting a petition for recognition to the ABVS and a public comment period, in 2011, the ABVS submitted the documents to the COE with a recommendation for recognition for the new specialty organization.

The council did not recommend provisional recognition, and, ultimately, ACAW appealed to the Board of Governors, which, on May 1, overturned the COE decision, resulting in the council's recommendation to the Executive Board granting ACAW provisional recognition.

Among the 27 charter diplomates of ACAW are AVMA staff members Drs. Gail C. Golab and Sheilah Robertson, director and assistant director of the Animal Welfare Division, respectively.

For more information about the American College of Animal Welfare and the credentialing process, go to [www.acaw.org](http://www.acaw.org).

### In new role, Sabin focuses on foreign, diversity initiatives

In August, Dr. Beth Sabin began a new position in the AVMA Office of the Executive Vice President, coordinating the Association's foreign affairs and efforts to promote diversity within the veterinary profession.

Dr. Sabin sees her dual roles as AVMA associate director for international and diversity initiatives as related. "A lot of what we do globally is building a better understanding of

our colleagues throughout the world. If we can do that for the Association, then that openness will translate to the American population as well," she said.

Dr. Sabin has been with the AVMA for 14 years, most of them as assistant director in the Education and Research Division. In that time, she served as staff consultant to the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates, American Board of Veterinary Specialties, the Research and Education councils, and the Committee on International Veterinary Affairs.

In 2009, the AVMA Executive Board named her staff coordinator for international affairs in the Office of the Executive Vice President. Since then, she had balanced those duties with her responsibilities as an assistant director in the Education and Research Division. She says her new role allows her to focus exclusively on the AVMA's global outreach and diversity initiatives.

Several AVMA divisions and representatives are engaged in global veterinary medicine, according to Dr. Sabin, who added that such work should be organized. Similarly, the AVMA's ongoing outreach to underrepresented populations in veterinary medicine was not being internally coordinated.

The need for a full-time AVMA staff position dedicated to diversity was first identified in "Unity Through Diversity," the 2006 report of the AVMA Task Force on Diversity.

Dr. Sabin expects to work closely with the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges as well as the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America and the Student AVMA. In September, she participated in the Member Services Committee meeting during its discussion of diversity issues.



Dr. Beth Sabin

Eventually, Dr. Sabin would like to play a part in developing continuing education sessions for the AVMA convention that focus on the financial rewards of reaching out to a diverse clientele.

### **SAVMA wants a seat at the table**

The Student AVMA House of Delegates met Aug. 5-6 during the AVMA Annual Convention in San Diego. SAVMA President Bridget Heilsberg (COL '13) presided over the meeting.

This was after Heilsberg addressed the AVMA House of Delegates to share SAVMA's positions on legislation regarding student debt and bankruptcy, workforce surveys, and AVMA policies. Issues such as economics and workforce demand are omnipresent concerns for most veterinary students, she said.

Nathaniel Vos (COL '14) spoke to the SAVMA HOD as veterinary economic issues liaison. Vos reported on the connections made earlier this year with key allies such as the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges' Student Debt Advisory Group, the AVMA Veterinary Economics Strategy Committee, and the Veterinary Business Management Association.

Caitlin Pohlit (OSU '14), chair of the SAVMA Economics and Professional Development Committee, shared with the SAVMA House the AVMA's current focus on economic issues, including devoting \$330,000 for a veterinary workforce study to assess current and future supply of, and demand for, veterinary services, as well as the creation of the AAVMC Student Debt Advisory Group. The committee then brought forth a motion to create a veterinary economics ad hoc position as a source of advice for the SAVMA HOD and SAVMA Executive Board. Pohlit explained that the committee wanted SAVMA to step up and create its own voice, as veterinary students and recent graduates are acutely feeling the effects of rising debt-to-income ratios and shifting workforce demands. The motion was approved.

Another topic of discussion was the increasing interest in the 2+2

system of veterinary education. This system has students complete two preclinical academic years at a satellite campus. Ben Schmidt (ISU '14) made a motion to create a new class of nonvoting membership for delegates from these satellite campuses so that they can contribute a voice to SAVMA discussions. The motion passed, and two Nebraska veterinary students were welcomed as the first satellite chapter delegates to the SAVMA House.

The SAVMA House also welcomed Dr. Walter R. Threlfall as the incoming AVMA vice president. Dr. Threlfall addressed the delegates and named student debt, salaries, and demand for veterinarians as top issues. He wanted students to know that he is a vessel for them to bring their concerns to the AVMA.

### **Veterinary education constantly evolving**

Veterinary education has evolved with the changing times and will continue to do so to remain relevant, according to speakers at a daylong session on the topic Aug. 4 during the AVMA Annual Convention.

"Veterinary Medical Education in a Global Environment" was organized by the AVMA Committee on International Veterinary Affairs and sponsored by the 31st World Veterinary Conference.

Dr. Donald F. Smith, former dean of veterinary medicine at Cornell University, spoke about four eras of veterinary medicine in the United States: the dominance of the horse and ties to human medicine (1850-1920); the land-grant system with its focus on agriculture and public health (1890-1960); companion animal medicine, clinical specialties, and women veterinarians (1960 to present); and biomedical research, information technology, and the re-emergence of zoonotic diseases (1980-2000).

Dr. Deborah Kochevar, dean of the Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, talked about changes in veterinary education within the past decade or so.

Previously, a traditional, instructor-centered lecture with a PowerPoint

presentation would be given to prepare students for an examination. Now, the trend is to use a blended education delivery system, which places less importance on having an instructor convey all the educational content, in favor of emphasizing multiple methods for students to obtain information.

Part of the future of veterinary education may involve greater use of online resources, according to Dr. Julie A. Funk, director of the online professional Master of Science in Food Safety program at Michigan State University.

She cited the Babson 2011 Survey of Online Learning that found the number of students enrolled in at least one online course increased from 1.6 million in 2002 to 6.1 million in 2010.

Dr. Funk lauded the growing popularity of sites that provide online courses that are free and open to anyone, such as the Khan Academy and Coursera. Some of these sites allow users to create student groups or offer to send resumes of top-performing users to potential employers.

### **Workforce study authors discuss unmet needs**

Authors of the National Research Council's report for the National Academy of Sciences on "Workforce Needs in Veterinary Medicine" provided details about unmet needs in public practice, academia, and industry Aug. 5 during the AVMA Annual Convention in San Diego.

Dr. Bonnie J. Buntain, former chief public health veterinarian of the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service, expounded on one of the report's recommendations that urges state and federal governments to reexamine their policies on remuneration, recruitment, and retention of veterinarians.

She pointed to the Veterinary Medical Officer Talent Management Advisory Council as a positive step the federal government is taking to address this recommendation. The council is tasked with identifying the current and future needs of the federal veterinary workforce and ways

the federal government can better meet those needs. She said it is moving forward on a strategic workforce plan for veterinarians in federal government and has already identified core competencies and skills required of the veterinary workforce in federal agencies.

Drs. Sheila W. Allen, dean of the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine, and Gay Y. Miller, professor of epidemiology and preventive medicine at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, talked about the potential for a serious shortage of veterinary faculty members.

The total current U.S. veterinary faculty is slightly fewer than 4,000 individuals. The NRC report projects a 14 percent increase in the number of students from 2007-2016 and an 18 percent growth in faculty during that same time.

However, Dr. Miller said, the pipeline of veterinary educators appears inadequate for a number of reasons. These include the decreasing availability of stipends, growing student debt, and unpredictable research funding streams.

Veterinary colleges may need to consider alternatives, such as taking on faculty who have not come from residency training programs, sharing faculty, and enticing residents with an agreement that they would be hired on as faculty after finishing their program.

Finally, Dr. Gary L. Cockerell, president and founder of Cockerell Alliances, spoke about the need for veterinarians in corporate practice. According to a survey of industry conducted by the NRC committee, respondents indicated 15.7 percent of currently employed industry veterinarians would be 65 or older by 2016. Those future openings will only add to the numerous veterinarian positions currently open within industry.

Dr. Cockerell touted the Coalition for Veterinary Pathology Fellows created by the American College of Veterinary Pathologists and the Society of Toxicologic Pathology for helping fill positions within corporate practice for the past few years.

Financial commitments to establish training positions, primarily from

corporations, have increased from \$1.1 million in 2005 to \$6.8 million in 2011. As a result, 17 anatomic pathology, three clinical pathology, and nine post-DVM residencies were funded just this past year.

### **AVMF scholarship winners announced**

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation announced Aug. 5 during its board of directors meeting in San Diego the 18 recipients of scholarships it handed out this year through its 2012 Veterinary Student Scholarship program. Each student won \$1,000.

The awardees and their career interests are as follows:

- Kristin Bohling (ISU-UNL '14), food animal medicine—cattle.
- Sharon Ostermann (CAL '13), shelter medicine.
- Travis Vlietstra (ISU '14), mixed animal medicine.
- Candace Wimbish (OKL '14), U.S. Army Veterinary Corps.
- Samantha McGill (WIS '14), mixed animal medicine.
- Kathleen Kraska (ORS '13), public health.
- Chelsea Crawford (WIS '15), food animal medicine.
- Todd Marlo (IL '13), mixed animal medicine.
- Katrina Castaneda (CAL '13), small animal medicine.
- Dana Lieu (WSU '15), production animal medicine.
- Heidi Pecoraro (COL '14), academia—clinician and researcher.
- Danielle Botting (MIN '14), swine medicine.
- Braidee Foote (CAL '13), equine medicine.
- Lu Dao (UCD '13), food animal medicine.
- Kelsey Shaw (COR '14), public health.
- Julia Herman (COL '15), research and community outreach.
- Heidi Broadley (TUF '13), shelter medicine.
- Megan Mathias (NCU '14), mixed animal medicine.

The Winn Feline Scholarship, awarded by the AVMF in the amount of \$2,500, went to Alison McKay

(ORS '13), who is interested in feline medicine.

The scholarship is paired with the AVMF/Winn Excellence in Feline Research Award, presented Aug. 7 during the AVMA Annual Convention. Dr. Niels Pedersen of Davis, Calif., won this year's award and the accompanying \$2,500.

The two awards are designed to promote and encourage feline health studies by established veterinary research scientists and those entering this field of study.

And the AVMF/American Kennel Club Career Achievement Award in Canine Research went to Dr. Edward Feldman of Berkeley, Calif.

### **Education council schedules site visits**

The AVMA Council on Education has scheduled site visits to two schools and colleges of veterinary medicine for the remainder of 2012.

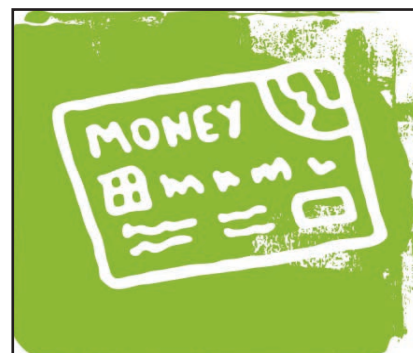
Site visits are planned for the University of Montreal Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Nov. 4-8; and Western University of Health Sciences College of Veterinary Medicine, Dec. 2-8.

The council welcomes written comments on these plans or the programs to be evaluated. Comments should be addressed to Dr. David E. Granstrom, Director, Education and Research Division, AVMA, 1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100, Schaumburg, IL 60173. Comments must be signed by the person submitting them to be considered.

## **Practice**

### **Survey identifies barriers to pet ownership**

A new survey has found that barriers to pet ownership include not only



expenses and lifestyle factors but also a dislike of cats and grief over the loss of a previous pet.

The American Humane Association's Animal Welfare Research Institute released the results in August, not long after the AVMA released data revealing a decrease between 2006 and 2011 in the percentage of households that own pets.

The February survey by the American Humane Association examined reasons for not owning a dog or cat. The survey is the first phase of a three-part study on how to keep dogs and cats in homes, thereby reducing euthanasia at shelters.

The respondents to the survey were 500 people who had never owned a dog or cat as an adult, 500 people who previously had owned a cat but not within the past 12 months, and 500 people who previously had owned a dog but not within the past 12 months.

Among previous pet owners, the most common reason for giving a pet away was that landlords did not allow the pet.

The top reasons that previous dog owners gave for not currently owning a dog were veterinary expenses, general expenses, and a lack of time. The top reasons that previous cat owners gave for not currently owning a cat were travel, cleanup, and veterinary expenses.

Twenty percent of previous dog owners and 17 percent of previous cat owners reported that they were still grieving the loss of the previous pet.

People who had never owned a dog or cat as an adult cited lifestyle as one of the top reasons for not owning a dog or cat. Nonowners said other top reasons for not owning a dog were cleanup and general expenses. More than a third of nonowners said they do not like cats, and nearly a third said they do not like the smell of a litter box.

The survey identified demographic differences among prospective owners of cats and dogs. Most respondents age 65 and older were unreceptive to future pet ownership.

The survey found that only 22 percent of previous dog owners and

18 percent of previous cat owners acquired the previous pet from a shelter or rescue organization. A much higher proportion of prospective pet owners said they would acquire a future pet from a shelter or rescue organization.

## Issues

### Making progress one meeting at a time

At the third joint AVMA-Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges Economic Meeting, held during the AVMA Annual Convention in San Diego, attendees learned more about the AVMA workforce study and an AAVMC-sponsored proposal to launch an initiative aimed at providing students with debt planning and management tools.

Dr. Link Welborn, AVMA Veterinary Economics Strategy Committee chair, said meeting participants also discussed other areas of potential collaboration, such as a profession-wide effort to increase funding for veterinary colleges, new career opportunities for veterinarians, and a wide-scale teaching strategy for low-demand veterinary careers.

Relative to the AVMA veterinary workforce study, the veterinary leaders heard how those conducting the study will assess the current and future supply of, and demand for, veterinary services; determine the degree of geographic imbalance in supply and demand; conduct research on key factors and trends affecting veterinarian workforce decisions; and create a model for "scenario planning." Plus, they learned the study will quantify implications of key trends and factors related to the demand for veterinary services, the economic viability of practice, and models of care delivery.

So far, the AVMA Workforce Advisory Group has reviewed the first interim report, which primarily addressed supply, Dr. Wellborn said. An additional interim report is expected in December, with the final report and scenario planning model due in April 2013.

As for the AAVMC student debt initiative, the AAVMC Student Debt Initiative Advisory Group in its report issued in August has recommended

specific steps that schools can take to educate and assist students. It has data and best practices broken down into three time periods for debt management education: as a preveterinary student, veterinary student, and early-career veterinarian.

Some initiatives include updating the AAVMC website's information on how students can fund their veterinary education, creating a "cost of applying" calculator and an interactive map of veterinary schools highlighting tuition at each, and developing and maintaining an online private organizer for students to input and track their educational loans.

The AAVMC will now consider the report's recommendations and implement them accordingly.

The AAVMC and AVMA plan to continue meeting and working cooperatively, with plans to reconvene at the North American Veterinary Conference in January 2013 in Orlando, Fla.

### AAVMC lends voice to affirmative action case

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges has joined nearly 30 other health education and professional organizations to file an amicus brief Aug. 13 in the Supreme Court case of *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*. Oral arguments were scheduled for Oct. 10 at press time.

The case addresses UT-Austin's policy of using race to evaluate in-state applicants who are not guaranteed admission by virtue of being in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class.

As of press time, 70 amicus briefs had been filed in support of the university while 15 had been filed supporting *Fisher*.

In deciding this case, the Supreme Court may revisit *Grutter v. Bollinger*, according to an AAMC press release. This was a 2003 lawsuit brought against the University of Michigan Law School, which held that the law school could properly consider race as one of many factors in its admissions processes.

In the brief, the AAMC urges the court not to overturn the 2003 *Grutter*



decision, saying that doing so could jeopardize the holistic review process used by medical schools across the nation to diversify their student bodies.

The association argues that medical schools have an obligation to redress current disparities in health care, whereby minority patients tend to receive less and lower-quality care than others, and to serve all of society. Medical schools, it says, have learned over many decades of experience that these goals cannot be accomplished unless physicians are educated in environments that reflect the ever-increasing diversity of the society they serve.

Race is only one of a multitude of factors considered when evaluating applicants, the AAMC wrote. Further, test scores and grades help determine merit; however, "The goal is not mechanically to admit students based on numerical criteria or to mirror the country's demographics, but rather to produce a class of physicians that is best equipped to serve all of society. ... Medical school administrators have found no other proxy that could substitute for individualized consideration of an applicant's entire background."

The AAMC also made mention of research that shows when physicians understand more about the diverse cultures of their patients, physician decision making is better informed, patients are more likely to follow their physicians' advice, and medical outcomes improve.

The AVMA was not asked to join the amicus brief.

## Community

### American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology

The American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology certified four new diplomates following the certification examination it conducted June 4-5 in New Orleans. The new diplomates are as follows:

Melissa Clark, Urbana, Ill.  
Heather Knych, Davis, Calif.  
Nicolas Villarino, Knoxville, Tenn.  
Katrina Viviano, Madison, Wis.

### ***Tritrichomonas foetus* study planned**

The Theriogenology Foundation has committed \$5,403.20 in funding toward an investigation into the chronic nature of infection with

*Tritrichomonas foetus* in naturally infected bulls.

The study was designed by a research group at the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine led by Dr. Andrew Lovelady. Dr. Lovelady (AUB '04) said, "Our group has proposed the theory that the accessory sex organs of the bull may play a role in the organism's ability to establish a chronic infection within some bulls. Although this theory has been briefly investigated in the past, we believe that we have newer technologies and sufficient evidence available at present to reinvestigate this theory."

His group conducted a small pilot study which, he said, has yielded evidence supporting its theory.

"Validation of our theory through this project could reveal important information regarding the epidemiology/pathophysiology of this economically devastating parasite," Dr. Lovelady said.

The American Association of Bovine Practitioners has awarded an AABP Research Assistantship to Dr. Lovelady, and the initial 75 percent of the \$5,000 grant was released at the opening ceremony of the AABP annual conference Sept. 20 in Montreal. 