

Veterinary Research News

Practice

Median incomes up, 2009-2011

The newest income numbers look better than a lot of veterinarians feel.

According to the recently released 2013 AVMA Report on Veterinary Compensation, median income for full-time private practitioners—comprising owners and associates—increased from \$97,000 in 2009 to \$100,000 in 2011. Median income for veterinarians in public and corporate practice—including academia, government, and industry—increased from \$109,000 in 2009 to \$124,000 in 2011.

As in private practice altogether, the median income was \$100,000 in 2011 for veterinarians in both companion animal–exclusive and –predominant practice. Income numbers for veterinarians in private practice comprise salary, bonuses, practice profits, consulting fees, and contributions to retirement or profit-sharing plans.

Income is not commensurate with the expertise of veterinarians, said Dr. Kate Knutson, president of the American Animal Hospital Association.

“The hospitals and clinics are trying their hardest to bring quality medicine to their clients, and all that equipment and training has a huge cost to it,” Dr. Knutson said. Partly as a result, she said, practices cannot afford to pay veterinarians enough for a decent living—especially considering the increase in student debt.

Dr. Karen E. Felsted of Felsted Veterinary Consulting cited multiple factors as contributing to soft practice revenues.

“Part of it could be because fewer people are visiting, and that could be because of the economy or because they’re getting their information from the Internet or whatever,” she said. “But it could also be that there are more veterinarians out

there, and the income is getting spread around among a greater number of veterinarians and a greater number of practices.”

As in companion animal practice, the median income was \$100,000 in 2011 for veterinarians in both food animal–exclusive and –predominant practice.

The numbers belie the idea that food animal practice is the poor cousin of companion animal practice, said Dr. Nigel Cook, president of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners and head of the Food Animal Production Medicine Section at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine.

“If you just left out the cost of education, these are pretty good salaries,” Dr. Cook said. “If education is going to continue to cost what it is, which I don’t see changing very easily, then what are the ways we can increase practice revenues?”

In equine practice, the median income was \$88,000 in 2011. Equine practitioners have been struggling in the wake of the recession and a decrease in the number of horses, said Dr. Ann Dwyer, president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners.

Median income for veterinarians in public and corporate practice in 2011 ranged from \$88,000 for state and local government to \$112,000 for academia, federal government, and uniformed services to \$160,000 for industry.

Dr. Cook said state budget cuts led many state universities to reduce employees’ pay, pensions, or other benefits in recent years. The median income for veterinarians in academia had remained constant, however, at \$103,000 in 2007 and 2009, then increased to \$112,000 in 2011.

“I think the economy is going to keep improving for the foreseeable

future,” Dr. Cook said. “I think most of the states have done the difficult things.”

In 2011, veterinary specialists had a median income of \$136,000 in public and corporate practice, in comparison with \$148,000 in private practice.

Female veterinarians continue to earn less than male veterinarians. Female veterinarians in private practice had a median income of \$88,000 in 2011, while male veterinarians had a median income of \$112,000. For public and corporate practice, female veterinarians had a median income of \$112,000 in 2011, while male veterinarians had a median income of \$136,000.

Even for veterinarians with the same amount of experience, female veterinarians generally earn less than male veterinarians. In private practice, female associates and owners generally earn less than their male counterparts both in terms of total income and in terms of hourly income.

Veterinarians and researchers say factors contributing to this income disparity could include the broader societal context, women’s approach to business and family, issues with pay negotiations, and the career choices of female veterinarians.

Uncharted waters

The U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program at Point Loma in San Diego has a robust research component that benefits not only its California sea lions and bottle-nosed dolphins, but also, by extension, other marine mammal and zoo communities as well as the greater veterinary and human medical fields.

In its more than 50 years of existence, program veterinarians have made big breakthroughs, such as discovering how to safely administer anesthesia to dolphins, how to study

dolphin physiology in the open sea, how to apply medical technology to marine mammals, and how to use temporary threshold shift, a well-established parameter in human audiology, as a metric to identify how much sound is tolerable for marine mammals.

Yet, despite publication of more than 1,000 papers since the program's inception, much remains unknown about marine mammals. One reason is that the sample size is smaller compared with that of domestic animals, said Capt. Kamala Rapp-Santos, an attending veterinarian with the program. Plus, marine mammals are not as easy to work with as domestic animals are, and most research has been limited to the past 50 years or so.

A procedure still in research is the pulmonary function test. The program's physiologists and clinicians have been working to define the functional parameters of dolphin and sea lion lungs. They hope to learn what the animals' normal pulmonary capabilities are so the animals can be better ventilated during anesthesia.

Dr. Cynthia R. Smith, executive director of the National Marine Mammal Foundation, is investigating ammonium urate uroliths, which are commonly found in managed-collection dolphins.

Dr. Rapp-Santos is working with the Naval Medical Center to develop an extended-release antibiotic hydrogel. She said dolphins can form abscesses in the body, including their lymph nodes. The gel would allow veterinarians to treat the abscess without pulling the dolphin from the water.

Additional areas that program researchers are working on include using adipose stem cells to heal skin wounds and defining diabetes in dolphins, which have a type 2-like syndrome that they can turn on and off.

The marine mammal program is home to a cadre of dolphins and sea lions responsible for hunting mines, locating divers, and recovering underwater objects. Over the years, the program has gained a reputation for its innovative approach to the health care of marine mammals and its commitment to translational research.

The program's animal care team comprises members of the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps, civilians, National Marine Mammal Foundation veterinarians, and other animal health care experts. Together, the marine mammal veterinarians who care for the program's 80 dolphins and 40 sea lions constitute the largest group of marine mammal veterinarians in the country.

For more information, go to the AVMA website, www.avma.org, click on JAVMA News under "News & Publications," select the April 1 issue from the JAVMA News archives, and read the related stories "Top-notch

care for elite fleets" and "Many marine mammals, one health."

AVMA Agricultural economist heads newest AVMA division

Michael Dicks, PhD, spent most of his career at Oklahoma State University studying the production, distribution, and consumption of agricultural goods and services.



Michael Dicks, PhD

Now, Dr. Dicks will apply his analytic skills to veterinary medicine as director of the AVMA's new Veterinary Economics Division.

The AVMA Executive Board created the division in 2011 as part of a broad strategy to reverse perceived economic declines throughout much of the veterinary profession.

"No question that economic issues are among those most pressing for our profession," AVMA President Douglas G. Aspros said. "One of our most significant initiatives was to approve a new economics division, and we've waited impatiently to identify the right person to lead it.

"Mike Dicks has the background and experience to allow us to gather and analyze the data we need to understand, perhaps for the first time, where we are and where we're headed. I expect Mike to help make AVMA a more effective advocate for our members, and he'll be a terrific asset for the profession for years to come."

For the past 24 years, Dr. Dicks has worked at Oklahoma State, most recently as a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and as chair of international trade and development in the School of International Studies.

Along with his academic duties, Dr. Dicks has operated a 100-head Angus cow-calf operation for several years in Stillwater, Okla.

Dr. Dicks earned his master's degree from the University of Missouri in 1982 while working on a waste-to-energy project in Tunisia. Three years



A dolphin undergoes a CT scan at the Naval Medical Center

later, the university awarded him a doctorate in agricultural economics. From 1984-1989, Dr. Dicks worked for the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service in Washington, D.C. In 1989, he was hired by Oklahoma State to work on agricultural policy.

Over the past three decades, Dr. Dicks has assisted farm, commodity, and environmental groups; the USDA; and Congress in developing farm policy. He also has aided foreign governments, U.S. agencies, and nongovernmental organizations in international agricultural development activities.

Since accepting his role as director of the AVMA's new division, Dr. Dicks has begun to familiarize himself with the economic studies and reports on veterinary medicine, specifically the IHS Global analysis of the U.S. veterinary workforce that the AVMA commissioned, which is expected to be released this April.

Before Dr. Dicks learned about the job at the AVMA, he had been planning to retire. He couldn't pass up the opportunity to work in a field with so much research potential, however. "I feel like I'm a kid in a candy store," he said. "There are all these data that AVMA has collected over the years, and they've been underutilized. It's going to be fun trying to put together a picture of what's going on in the veterinary profession."

Dr. Dicks described his role as providing the AVMA with an economic perspective of the challenges confronting the veterinary profession. Then he'll propose alternative solutions to the problems and identify the potential costs of each action. "My job is to increase our understanding by examining every issue from an economic standpoint," he said.

And don't bother asking for his opinion. "I do not like being asked for my opinion," Dr. Dicks explained. "I can tell you what the data show, and what you might think about and some options, but my opinion is irrelevant. My arguments are not based on beliefs but the raw data."

The work of the AVMA's economics division won't be limited to

veterinary employment and salary issues alone, according to Dr. Dicks. "What can we learn about animal welfare by including economics in those evaluations?" he asked. "It's not just about how I feel, but it's also about what I'm able to afford. We all have wants and needs, but we can only fulfill those based on how much money we have."

When the National Research Council published its long-awaited study on workforce needs in veterinary medicine in 2012, researchers said the lack of data in key areas hindered their work. If information on a particular area of the profession wasn't available, assumptions were made, which, Dr. Dicks explained, helps him immensely.

"Now we know where to begin. Every place where there's an assumption, we need to get the data and get rid of that assumption. We need to find out exactly what it is and not assume. That pretty much lays out our work plan," he said.

Soon, a statistical analyst and an economic analyst will join the division and begin building a database of information about the U.S. veterinary profession. Dr. Dicks said it will contain every bit of data imaginable, such as the number and type of pets and livestock in specific geographic areas and the socioeconomic characteristics of the people in the area and their willingness to pay for veterinary services.

"The idea is use all that information to increase the demand for veterinary services," Dr. Dicks explained. "That's what we're ultimately talking about."

Training not required to prescribe sustained-release opioids

The AVMA is reminding veterinarians that they are not federally required to obtain any special training prior to legally administering certain types of opioid drugs.

Two AVMA members recently alerted the Association that they had received letters from companies claiming prescribers of sustained-release opioids are required under federal law to be trained in proper

prescribing procedures and appropriate use of these drugs.

Those claims are false, according to Dr. Lynne White-Shim, assistant director of the AVMA Scientific Activities Division. "Veterinarians are not required by the federal government to undertake training on prescribing and use of sustained-release opioids. It's strongly encouraged but not required," she said. Some states may, however, require training for these drugs, Dr. White-Shim added, and she advised veterinarians to check their state regulations to determine whether they are in compliance.

The idea that the federal government requires additional training to legally prescribe certain drugs can be traced to the Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy—a Food and Drug Administration initiative intended to curb abuse and misuse of certain drugs.

The FDA has instituted various REMS requirements that limit drug access to certain prescribers, require specific communications about a drug of concern, or limit a certain drug's use to specific disease conditions.

When the FDA began considering a REMS for sustained-release opioids, the AVMA was concerned veterinary access to these drugs could be restricted. As a result, the AVMA participated in several meetings and advocated for veterinarian access to all sustained-release opioids.

"We underscored how valuable these drugs are, particularly for painful conditions in animals," Dr. White-Shim said.

"We recognize veterinarians already gain continuing education on opioids and other therapeutics through professional organizations and scientific conferences, which is a valuable way for veterinarians to stay current on best practices," she explained.

The AVMA will notify members of any changes in the REMS on sustained-release opioids, but there currently is no federal mandate for veterinarians to receive training on the prescribing of opioid drugs.

AVMA policies open for year-round comment

The AVMA recently opened its policies on professional issues for year-round member comment, creating new opportunities for members to communicate with the Association.

"The AVMA has an important leadership role in developing advisory policies that offer guidance and direction to our members, the veterinary profession, and the public. These policies range from the treatment of livestock and laboratory animals to the veterinary care that our pets receive," said Dr. Douglas G. Aspros, AVMA president.

"We don't develop these policies in a vacuum. In fact, we work very hard to collect input from all interested parties before we adopt new policies, and then strive to do this again when these policies come up for regular review.

"Now, with a new AVMA website that we launched in 2012, we are going to make it even easier for our members to communicate with us and offer feedback that will be used to help inform our decisions and AVMA policies."

Members of the AVMA and the Student AVMA can now comment on any of the Association's current professional policies by visiting the policies Web page at www.avma.org/KB/Policies. This page highlights policies currently under review, but also allows members to comment on any policy throughout the year.

Issues

A library of livestock heritage

A foundation in Rhode Island and Tufts University have been working to create a genetic library to preserve the attributes of rare and endangered livestock breeds.

The Swiss Village Farm Foundation, a privately funded foundation created in 1999, is establishing a collection similar to a seed bank. The collection of embryos and straws of semen, currently limited to ruminant breeds, could be used either to restore an extinct population or to study the genes that give advantages with

respect to, say, maternal ability, longevity, feed utilization, heat tolerance, or disease resistance.

Sarah C. Bowley, program and livestock manager for the foundation, said about 80 North American livestock breeds, including nonruminant breeds, are at risk of extinction, but the available technology precludes storing viable pig embryos or poultry eggs.

Preserving livestock breeds has become both a national and global concern.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, through its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, reported in 2007 that the world had lost a mean of almost one breed a month during the preceding six years. This alarmingly quick loss of biodiversity, particularly genetic diversity, is eroding the potential to adapt agriculture to changing conditions such as human population expansion and climate change.

The FAO report, "The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture," stated that 20 percent of the world's 7,600 reported livestock breeds were at risk of extinction.

Over about 11 years, the foundation has acquired samples from 24 ruminant breeds and complete collections—or at least 300 embryos and 3,000 straws of semen—from nine. The samples are collected, frozen, and maintained by a mix of employees of the foundation and the Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. George Saperstein, chair of the Department of Environmental and Population Health in the Tufts veterinary school, said the foundation's



Dorset Horn ram

benefactor, Dorrance H. Hamilton, bought the farm property in 1998 and sought advice from Tufts on how it could be used to help reduce loss of genetic diversity in agriculture. The farm's 45 acres would have room only for a small flock of swine or sheep, but he suggested creating a livestock seed bank to save them all and create a library of livestock heritage.

The foundation is on track to complete the collections detailed in its original 20-year mission, Dr. Saperstein said, although the goals shift with breed popularity.

The Swiss Village farm typically houses about 125 borrowed or donated animals, the latter of which are later sent to breeders, Bowley said.

The heritage breeds have typically declined in popularity because of some production disadvantage. Many grow more slowly or produce smaller quantities of meat, milk, or wool than do animals from popular commercial breeds.

Dr. Saperstein said the U.S. became the world's most effective agriculture producer by selecting for traits important for human survival and productivity. But he cited the mid-1800s potato famine in Ireland as an example of the risks posed by limiting genetic diversity.

The recent increase in resistance to commonly used dewormers is a good example of why preserving rare breeds is so important, Dr. Saperstein said. Small and slow-growing Gulf Coast sheep are less than ideal for commercial purposes, but they can survive heavy parasite loads without becoming anemic.

Dr. David J. Matsas, assistant professor of environmental and population health at Tufts, said certain areas of modern agriculture are dominated by one or only a few breeds, such as the millions of Holstein cattle that produce most of the milk consumed in the U.S. He noted that Holsteins have high productivity, but that fertility of the breed is falling.

Heritage breeds might contain genes that could benefit Holsteins if introduced through upcoming genetic technologies, Dr. Matsas said. He has overseen embryo and semen

collection since the foundation began operating.

Dr. Saperstein expressed concern that intensive selection for production-related factors could lead to declines in properties that people enjoy, such as the taste of beef. He wants people to have a chance to develop breed-based preferences based on, say, taste, texture, shelf life, or color.

Dr. Saperstein worked early in his career to eradicate genes responsible for diseases in livestock. He said that, with farms and production breeds becoming less diverse, veterinary medicine can help livestock owners, animals, and future veterinarians by helping to conserve the remaining diversity.

Cats may be greater threat to wildlife than first thought

A new study claims free-ranging domestic cats kill substantially more wildlife than previously thought and may be the single greatest source of human-related death of birds and mammals in the United States.

Scientists with the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate that cats kill 2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals in the contiguous United States every year. The scientists identified feral cats as being responsible for most of the deaths—approximately 69 percent of bird deaths and 89 percent of mammal deaths.

The study goes on to speculate that free-ranging cats could kill 258 million to 822 million reptiles and 95 million to 299 million amphibians annually.

Scott Loss, PhD, lead author of the study published Jan. 29 in the journal *Nature Communications*, said his team's research indicates cat predation is an even bigger environmen-

tal and ecological threat than anyone realized.

"Our study provides motivation for further research and for incorporating cat impacts into conservation and management efforts," said Dr. Loss, a fellow with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute.

Earlier estimates of annual cat-related bird deaths in America were sparse, but a study published in the 2009 Proceedings of the Fourth International Partners in Flight Conference put the number at around 1 billion.

The *Nature Communications* study is the latest development in a long-running debate over the scope of wildlife death attributable to cat predation and how to reduce the number feral cats, which the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals estimates to be in the tens of millions.

"We've long known that feral cats can decimate wild animals, but these numbers elevate the threat to a new level," said Gary Langham, PhD, chief scientist for the National Audubon Society. "The results add new urgency to the feral cat problem and underscore the need for effective solutions to protect wild birds. Audubon strongly supports all efforts using science to better understand the causes and impacts of bird mortality."

The CATalyst Council, a national initiative comprising animal health and welfare organizations, worries the study and related news reports cast a negative light on cats and might hinder the ability of shelters to place them in adoptive homes.

"We regret the fact that the articles written about the study have maligned cats as a whole, when in fact, the vast majority of the estimated destruction to wildlife was reportedly by feral or stray cats," Dr. Jane Brunt, CATalyst Council executive director, said. "This works to discourage prospective cat owners from adopting one of the hundreds of thousands of healthy, enjoyable cats that are held in shelters across this nation."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature, an environmental advocacy organization, lists the domestic cat among the world's

100 worst invasive alien species on account of the danger they pose to native wildlife populations.

Dr. Loss and his colleagues designed a mathematical model based on 21 publications that estimated free-ranging cat predation in the United States and Europe. They took a rigorous and conservative approach, excluding studies that did not distinguish between owned cats and unowned cats and studies based on a small sample size or a short sample collection period.

"When we ran the model, we didn't know what to expect," said Pete Marra, PhD, a research scientist with the Smithsonian Institution and the study's senior author. "We were absolutely stunned by the results."

Prior to the study's publication, cats were thought to kill far fewer birds than were other human-related threats, such as building collisions and pesticides, and were unlikely to have a significant effect on mainland vertebrate populations. "Given these results, free-ranging cats are likely having a population-level impact on native species of birds," Dr. Marra said.

Despite the high wildlife mortality rate, policies to manage free-ranging cat populations are dictated by concerns for the welfare of the cats rather than the ecological impacts they're having, according to the study. Trap-neuter-return colonies, the study states, are potentially harmful to wildlife populations and are implemented without consideration of the scientific evidence and the environmental review process usually required for actions with harmful environmental consequences.

The Audubon Society's Dr. Langham said, "We must have the courage to investigate and address all human sources of wild bird mortality."

Louise Holton believes the study authors are tacitly advocating for lethal control policies to reduce feral cat populations. "They don't, of course, say 'killing' outright, because they know this is a cat-loving society," said Holton, president and founder of Alley Cat Rescue, which supports nonlethal control of free-ranging cat populations.



Holton said the authors ignored several studies showing cats prey on young, old, and sickly birds and mammals and that any bird population unable to withstand cat predation would've been wiped out long ago. Agriculture and habitat loss, she added, are in fact the major causes for declines in wild bird populations.

"Trap-neuter-return definitely works," Holton said. "Catch-and-kill seems like an attractive, quick way to get rid of cats, but it usually fails, as new cats will move in and start the breeding process all over again."

Smithsonian and FWS scientists plan to further refine the estimates of how many birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians are killed by feral cats, including those in TNR colonies. They also hope to determine which wildlife species are most affected by free-ranging cats, the precise numbers of feral cats throughout the country, and where feral cats are more and less abundant.

Study finds neutering-disease link in Golden Retrievers

Neutering and the age at which a dog is neutered may affect the animal's risk for developing certain cancers and joint diseases, according to a study published Feb. 13 in the online scientific journal PLOS ONE.

An examination of health records of 759 Golden Retrievers by researchers with the University of California-Davis discovered significantly higher incidences of hip dysplasia, cranial cruciate ligament tears, lymphosarcomas, hemangiosarcomas, and mast cell tumors among neutered dogs, compared with sexually intact dogs.

"The study results indicate that dog owners and service dog trainers should carefully consider when to have their male or female dogs neutered," said the lead investigator, Dr. Benjamin Hart, a distinguished professor emeritus in the UC-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.

"It is important to remember, however, that because different dog breeds have different vulnerabilities to various diseases, the effects of early and late neutering also may vary from breed to breed," he said.

While results of the study are revealing, Dr. Hart said the relationship between neutering and disease risk is a complex issue. For example, the increased incidence of joint diseases among early-neutered dogs is likely a combination of the effect of neutering on the young dog's growth plates and the increase in body weight that is commonly seen in neutered dogs.

A small body of research has indicated that neutering can have adverse health effects for certain dog breeds. A study of the relationship between life expectancy and ovary removal in Rottweilers found Rottweilers spayed after they were 6 years old were 4.6 times as likely to reach 13 years of age as were Rottweilers spayed at a younger age.

Against that backdrop, Dr. Hart and colleagues launched their study, using a single hospital database. The study was designed to examine the effects of neutering on the risks of several diseases in the same breed, distinguishing between males and females and between early or late neutering and not neutering.

Researchers focused on Golden Retrievers because of the breed's popularity and its vulnerability to various cancers and joint disorders. The breed also is favored for work as a service dog.

The research team reviewed the records of female and male Golden Retrievers, ranging in age from 1 to 8 years, that had been examined at UC-Davis' William R. Pritchard Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital for hip dysplasia, cranial cruciate ligament tear, lymphosarcoma, hemangiosarcoma, and mast cell tumor. The dogs were classified as sexually intact, neutered before 12 months of age, or neutered at 12 months of age or later.

The disease rates for all five diseases were significantly higher in both males and females that were neutered either early or late, compared with that of sexually intact dogs. Specifically, early neutering was associated with an increase in the occurrence of hip dysplasia, cranial cruciate ligament tear, and lymphosarcoma in males and in the occurrence

of cranial cruciate ligament tear in females.

Late neutering was associated with the subsequent occurrence of mast cell tumors and hemangiosarcoma in females.

In most areas, the findings of this study were consistent with that of earlier studies, suggesting similar increases in disease risks. The UC-Davis study, however, is the first to specifically report an increased risk of mast cell tumors and hemangiosarcoma with late neutering.

Furthermore, the new study showed a 100 percent increase in the incidence of hip dysplasia among early-neutered males. Earlier studies had reported a 17 percent increase among all neutered dogs, compared with all non-neutered dogs, indicating the importance of the new study in making gender and age-of-neutering comparisons.

The study is available at <http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0055937>.

A new approach to teaching ethics

Responding to concerns about a perceived lack of training in veterinary ethics, the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics is scheduled to release an online course in April that introduces veterinarians and veterinary students to common ethical concerns they may experience in practice.

The course was the brainchild of former SVME president Dr. John McCarthy, who died before it could be finished. When Dr. Alice Villalobos became SVME president in 2010, she saw the potential in the project and helped guide it to completion.

Written by multiple authors, the seven-module course is designed to provide a basic framework for examining and resolving ethical dilemmas. Rather than steering users in a preferred direction, the course allows them to draw their own personal conclusions.

Caitlin Dooley, a third-year veterinary student at Washington State University, appreciates the opportunity to receive extracurricular ethics training. After learning the technique for dewclaw removal and tail docking

last year, for instance, her professor mentioned that “this is something you all need to decide for yourselves—whether or not you want to perform these procedures.”

Unsure how to resolve the question for herself, Dooley quickly saw the potential benefits of ethics training. “I think it’s important to have a process of knowing: Do I want to do this? Or most importantly, for each person to have an understanding of how to decide whether it’s right or wrong.”

Sylvie Cloutier, PhD, agrees there is merit to an online course. She tells *JAVMA News*, “We need to find ways to provide the essential tools for students—not only how to deal with ethical issues, but also, where to find information to reach these conclusions.”

Some within the ethics community argue that an online forum may not be the optimal method for delivering this information. At the forefront is Bernard Rollin, PhD, who believes the study of ethics inherently requires interpersonal contact and discussion. He recommends redesigning veterinary curricula to remove ethics as a separate course and integrate the topic into existing coursework.

While some members of the SVME agree with Dr. Rollin in theory, most think a complete overhaul of the veterinary curriculum is unlikely in the present academic environment. “At the very least, the online course is a step in the right direction,” Dr. Villalobos explains.

The SVME is working to attain certification from the Registry of Approved Continuing Education so that veterinarians who successfully complete the series can receive continuing education credit.

Ultimately, Dr. Villalobos hopes that the course will expand beyond veterinarians and veterinary students, envisioning a series that “may be written specifically for paraprofessionals such as veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants, groomers, pet store and kennel personnel.”

The SVME online course will be available via the organization’s website, www.svme.org. The course will

carry a nominal fee to users to offset the cost of acquiring CE credit. Each module is expected to require one to two hours to complete.

Community

Auburn’s seventh veterinary dean named

Auburn University veterinary professor, department head, and alumnus Dr. Calvin Johnson was named dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine effective March 1.

Dr. Johnson joined the Auburn faculty as a professor in 2003 and was named head of the Department of Pathobiology in 2005. His experience also includes 11 years at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. Johnson becomes Auburn’s seventh veterinary dean since the college was established in 1907; the veterinary program began at Auburn in 1892. He succeeds Dr. Timothy Boosinger, who served as dean for 16 years until 2011, when he was named Auburn’s provost and vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Johnson was acting dean for 17 months, followed by Dr. Fred Hoerr as interim dean for four months.

“I look forward to building upon the successful leadership of Dr. Boosinger and all the previous deans. Among his many contributions, Dr. Boosinger developed a business model to construct state-of-the-art hospitals for large and small animals, and a premier educational facility that can accommodate expanded classes and novel instructional strategies,” Dr. Johnson said in a Feb. 13 Auburn press release. “My goal is to continue building the program and to support the faculty in pursuing the college’s mission.”

A 1986 veterinary graduate of Auburn, Dr. Johnson earned his doctorate in veterinary medical science (pathology) from North Carolina State University in 1992.



Dr. Calvin Johnson

He is chair of Auburn’s Health Sciences Task Force and serves on numerous other university and college committees.

He is also a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists. Dr. Johnson’s primary research areas involve the pathogenesis of feline immunodeficiency virus infection and veterinary immunology.

Couple gives millions for cancer research at Mizzou

The University of Missouri-Columbia College of Veterinary Medicine recently received a more than \$5 million estate gift that honors two of its alumni.

Cottrell and Kay Fox of Town and Country, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis, gave the gift in recognition of the work of their longtime family veterinarians, Drs. James Schuessler and Fred Bendick from St. Louis, who are both alumni of the veterinary college.

The money will support an endowment in companion animal medicine in honor of the two veterinarians. It also will fund studies in comparative oncology as well as enhance training for graduate students and veterinary oncology residents, according to a Feb. 20 MU press release.

The Foxes’ interest in the veterinary college began when their family dog was treated for cancer at the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital years ago. As a part of that cancer treatment, MU veterinarians used a drug developed at the university called samarium (brand name Quadramet). Years later, Kay Fox’s father was treated for cancer using the same drug.

According to the release, samarium was made available for use in human patients only because of the years of research by MU scientists at the veterinary college. Dr. Carolyn Henry, an MU professor of veterinary oncology, said in the release that the gift will be used to develop more effective methods of cancer diagnosis and treatment for animals and humans.

Thrall wins national teacher award

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges gave the

2012 AAVMC Distinguished Teacher Award to Dr. Mary Anna Thrall on March 8 during the association's 2013 Annual Conference in Alexandria, Va. This prestigious teaching award is sponsored by Zoetis.



Dr. Mary Anna Thrall

Dr. Thrall (PUR '70) is a veterinary clinical pathologist who taught at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences before moving to Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine on St. Kitts, West Indies, where she now serves as a professor of clinical pathology and section head of pathobiology.

A diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists,

Dr. Thrall has participated in the training of more than 40 veterinary clinical pathologists and more than 20 graduate students. In addition, she co-authored the reference textbook "Veterinary Hematology and Clinical Chemistry." Her research, supported by a long-term National Institutes of Health grant, has focused on bone marrow transplantation for management of lysosomal storage disorders.

Thirteen microbiologists certified

The American College of Veterinary Microbiologists certified 13 new diplomates following the board certification examination it held Nov. 30-Dec. 1, 2012, in Chicago.

The new diplomates are as follows:

Bacteriology/Mycolology

David Giovanardi, Verona, Italy

Neil Pople, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Anil Thachil, Falcon Heights, Minn.

Immunology

Alex Rodriguez-Palacios, Wooster, Ohio
Sudha Somarajan, Houston
Jan Suchodolski, College Station, Texas

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