

Veterinary Research News

Practice

The fat factor

In veterinary practice, the problem of overweight pets has become a steady undercurrent. Awareness is increasing, though, alongside resources for treatment.

The challenge remains for veterinarians to prioritize the issue. Although prescribing a program of diet and exercise sounds simple in theory, weight management can be far from simple in practice.

Estimates of the prevalence of overweight and obese cats and dogs in the United States range from less than 25 percent to more than 50 percent. A 2012 survey by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention found that 58.3 percent of cats and 52.5 percent of dogs in the United States were overweight.

Dr. Ernie Ward, founder of Seaside Animal Care in Calabash, N.C., established the association in 2005 to shine a spotlight on the problem. He said awareness of the issue exploded between 2007 and 2010. Now the topic permeates veterinary conferences, and the public has come to understand that pet obesity is a problem.

Nevertheless, public awareness suffers from a “fat gap.” According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, 45.3 percent of cat owners and 45.8 percent of dog owners assessed their pet as being normal weight when their veterinarian assessed the pet as being overweight.

Dr. Ward said veterinarians need to initiate the conversation with clients about a pet being overweight—or someone with less expertise will do so.

The new Tufts Obesity Clinic for Animals was opened by the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in 2012 to provide weight management and conduct research. The clinic is investigating approaches to make weight loss safer for pets and easier for pet owners and veterinarians.

Dr. Deborah E. Linder, the nutritionist who oversees the clinic, is examining the risk of nutrient deficiencies with calorie restriction. Despite the complexity of weight loss, Dr. Linder sees obesity as a curable condition.

“I recommend veterinarians become more of a coach and partner helping owners achieve weight-loss goals in their pets, instead of the typical doctor-patient relationship,” she said.

Many veterinary associations and pet food companies have been focusing more on overweight pets in recent years.

In 2008, the AVMA and Hill’s Pet Nutrition formed the Alliance for Healthier Pets—Obesity Awareness and Prevention Program. The short-term initiative provided materials for veterinary clinics and incorporated a campaign to increase public awareness of the health consequences of pet obesity.

The American Animal Hospital Association has been advocating for nutritional assessments for every pet at every veterinary visit, including an assessment of weight. In 2010, with a grant from Hill’s, AAHA released nutritional assessment guidelines as a resource for veterinarians.

At the same time, AAHA established a consortium to promote the important role nutrition plays in pet health, now under the name of the Pet Nutrition Alliance. The members are AAHA, the AVMA, the American College of Veterinary Nutrition, and other veterinary organizations. The sponsors are pet food companies.

This year, AAHA plans to release guidelines specific to weight management. Obesity is actually a form of malnutrition, emphasized Dr. Kate Knutson, AAHA president and chair of the Pet Nutrition Alliance.

Echoing that sentiment is Dr. Daniel S. Aja, Hill’s director of U.S. professional and veterinary affairs. He

said Hill’s recently worked with the University of Tennessee to develop the Healthy Weight Protocol, a tool to determine the ideal body weight of overweight cats and dogs. Hill’s introduced the tool in January with a new weight-loss diet, Metabolic.

Dr. Joe Bartges, a nutritionist at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, agrees that people have become more aware of the problem of pet obesity, but said, “There is more of an awareness of it with dogs and less of an awareness and appreciation of it with cats.”

He suggests making a body condition score part of every physical examination. For an overweight pet, the next step is to take a team approach, enlisting the owner as well as practice personnel. The team starts with one diet and exercise plan, and, if necessary, moves on to others, monitoring the pet’s progress.

The nutrition center at the Tennessee veterinary college sees many cases of pet obesity. The center offers a “fat camp” for some pets to stay on-site for a week or longer to begin losing weight.



Jasmine weighed 18 pounds when her owners took her to Tufts Obesity Clinic for Animals. She started with a body condition score of 8 on a scale from 1 to 9. Now her score is 5.

Calorie counts will soon start appearing on the labels of almost all dog and cat foods and treats, helping pet owners and veterinarians to compare products and determine feeding amounts.

The Association of American Feed Control Officials is adding the new labeling requirement to its 2014 model feed regulations, on a proposal from the American College of Veterinary Nutrition. Although AAFCO has no regulatory authority, most states follow the model regulations.

Labels will have to list kilocalories per kilogram of food and kilocalories per a common unit of the food, such as a cup or a can. The labels also will have to specify the method by which the manufacturer determined the calorie content, either by calculation or by a feeding trial.

AVMA

Granstrom promoted to AVMA executive position

The current director of the AVMA Education and Research Division, Dr. David E. Granstrom, was announced as the Association's new associate executive vice president and chief operating officer, effective Aug. 5.



Dr. David E. Granstrom

He will provide staff support to the AVMA House of Delegates, House Advisory Committee, and Judicial Council. In addition, he will work directly with many of the AVMA divisions, on top of collaborating with strategic plan goal managers and serving as liaison to the AVMA Group Health & Life Insurance Trust and AVMA PLIT. He succeeds J. Karl Wise, PhD, who retired as of Aug. 1.

Dr. Granstrom has been director of the Education and Research Division since March 2008. His responsibilities included overseeing AVMA policies and programs related to education, research, accreditation of veterinary colleges, certification of graduates of foreign colleges of

veterinary medicine, and recognition of veterinary medical specialties.

His tenure coincided with a transformative period for the COE during which members began considering veterinary programs with alternative teaching models, such as those with off-campus clinical teaching sites. Also during this time, the council incorporated into its Accreditation Policies and Procedures manual wording requiring veterinary colleges to teach nonclinical skills, such as client communication, and generate more outcome assessment information, including results of employer and alumni surveys and clinical competency checklists.

Dr. Granstrom aided the COE, too, in receiving continued recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education. The COE is still working to meet the DOE standards to extend recognition beyond this year.

Prior to 2008, Dr. Granstrom spent seven years with the Department of Agriculture. From 1997-2001, he served as an assistant director in the AVMA Education and Research Division.

In addition, Dr. Granstrom was an associate professor of parasitology at the Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center at the University of Kentucky Department of Veterinary Science from 1988-1997. There, he founded Equine Biodiagnostics Inc., which was later bought by Idexx.

He has also served as an environmental health officer for the U.S. Air Force Biomedical Science Corps and as a public health officer with the Kentucky Air National Guard Biomedical Science Corps.

Dr. Granstrom received his DVM degree in 1978 from Kansas State University, where he earned a doctorate in parasitology 10 years later. For five years, he owned a practice in Laurie, Mo.

Board keeps course on foreign veterinary school accreditation

A consensus was reached by the AVMA Executive Board during its June 6-8 meeting that the AVMA Council on Education should continue to accredit foreign veterinary schools. The discussion was

prompted by a report issued recently by the AVMA Task Force on Foreign Veterinary School Accreditation.

After the meeting, Dr. Jan Krehbiel, board chair, said the decision wasn't made lightly and that board members considered comments from their constituents, but ultimately determined that the benefits outweigh the risks.

In an online message posted June 11, Dr. Krehbiel wrote: "Allowing international schools to seek accreditation and recognition according to established COE standards improves the quality of global veterinary education. With the growing focus on one health and the global community, it's more important, now more than ever, that we foster international collaboration and communication; accreditation serves a vital function in this regard."

For those who may not be satisfied with the board's decision, Dr. Krehbiel told *JAVMA News*, "We're happy to respond to AVMA members, but we recognize it could result in a situation where we may have to respectfully agree to disagree."

The board held its discussion during an executive session that was closed to all but board members and senior AVMA staff. Dr. Krehbiel said the closed session allowed board members to feel comfortable expressing their opinions, resulting in a more candid discussion.

To see Dr. Krehbiel's full message about foreign veterinary school accreditation, go to <https://www.avma.org/News/Issues/Pages/MessageToAVMAMembersForeignAccred.aspx>.

National veterinary applicant plan in the works

The AVMA Executive Board voted to establish a Working Group on Veterinary Career Opportunity and Awareness at its meeting June 6-8. The goal is to create a plan to identify talented, science-minded high school and undergraduate students who might be interested in veterinary medicine.

At the same time, the plan will impart a more complete understanding of what the profession offers at a time when affordability of veterinary education and future earnings may be a deterrent to potential candi-

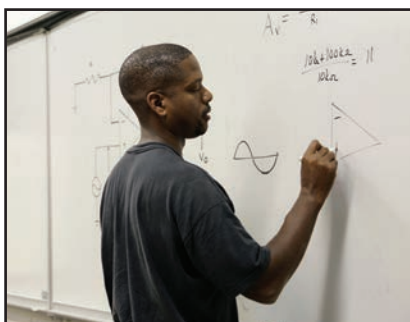
dates who would otherwise consider applying for admission to veterinary college.

The concern is, according to the recommendation submitted by board Chair Janver D. Krehbiel: "In light of the challenges currently facing the profession, potential veterinary students may be dissuaded from applying to veterinary colleges. This could lead to applicants who are less qualified for the veterinary profession than previous applicants have been."

The plan will, therefore, focus on large-scale opportunities that can be better leveraged by national organizations to supplement the narrower outreach currently done by veterinary colleges.

The working group's specific charge, according to the recommendation background material, includes developing a plan and budget to do the following:

- Identify and inform potential veterinary college applicants of the rewarding and varied career opportunities available within the profession.
- Identify the most opportune means for reaching these high school and undergraduate students with information about the profession.
- Enhance and target the delivery of information about the profession to students historically underrepresented in veterinary medicine and those who are diverse with respect to professional aspirations.
- Provide prospective students with a realistic assessment of the academic, financial, and competitive challenges involved in becoming a veterinarian.



Groups and conferences that potentially could be targeted include the National FFA Organization, American Pre-Veterinary Medical Association Symposium, Society for Advancing Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, Association of College Honor Societies, and Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students.

The working group will be composed of eight representatives from the AVMA, the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, and industry, specifically Zoetis, given its commitment to attracting science-minded individuals to careers in veterinary medicine. A veterinary student will also be a member.

The working group will provide an interim report following its first meeting and a final report to the board in fall 2014. The latter will include a proposed plan that outlines next steps and a budget to achieve the working group charge.

International efforts continue to promote profession

Work from an international group aimed at promoting the "scientific and cultural veterinary heritage" is under way.

The International Bourgelat Committee met May 27 in Paris during the general session of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

"The IBC will help us capture our rightful heritage as a profession on a global scale. Just as important, the future focus of the IBC will also include promoting and highlighting the critical and varied roles played by veterinarians in contemporary society," said Dr. Ron DeHaven, AVMA CEO and U.S. representative on the committee.

Brazil, Kenya, France, Iran, and Tunisia were also represented; representatives from Australia, Benin, and Sudan were invited but did not attend.

Drafts of the IBC's international and national websites were adopted at the end of June. The sites are scheduled to be up and running at the beginning of December 2014, on the occasion of the third World Conference on Veterinary Education in Brazil.

Also at the meeting, Dr. DeHaven was named president of the International Bourgelat Committee for 2014.

The committee was established May 21, 2012, and named after Claude Bourgelat, who founded the first veterinary school, in Lyon, France. Its mission is to continue the success of Vet2011, which celebrated the 250th anniversary of the profession, by creating the aforementioned websites and to promote one or more global events featuring the profession.

Obama reauthorizes ADUFA and AGDUFA programs

President Obama signed legislation on June 13 renewing the Food and Drug Administration's authority to collect animal drug user fees from pharmaceutical companies.

Funds collected through the Animal Drug and Animal Generic Drug User Fee programs provide the FDA with the resources to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of proposed new animal drugs and new generic animal drugs.

Both programs were set to expire this September. The Animal Drug and Animal Generic Drug User Fee Reauthorization Act signed by the president extends each user fee program until Oct. 1, 2018.

Tom Harkin of Iowa introduced the reauthorization bill in the Senate, which passed the legislation by unanimous consent May 8. Less than a month later, the House voted in favor of the Senate version 390-12 and sent the bill to the president.

Environment and the Economy Subcommittee Chairman John Shimkus of Illinois along with Cory Gardner of Colorado led the effort in the House to renew ADUFA and AGDUFA. "This law will continue the benefits for both animal health and human health that provide for the review of new animal drugs," Shimkus said.

"Keeping our animals healthy and our food supply safe is crucial in ensuring our own health," Gardner added. "This legislation gives producers throughout the country access to safe and effective animal drugs to treat their herds, keeping animals, and our food, healthy."

The AVMA has been advocating for this legislation because it will help ensure that more FDA-approved animal drugs are sent to the marketplace, giving veterinarians a greater ability to provide the best treatment for their patients.

Issues

Most NIH research chimps to be retired

The National Institutes of Health announced plans June 26 to substantially reduce the use of chimpanzees in biomedical research that the agency funds and to retire most of the 451 chimpanzees the NIH either owns or supports.

NIH Director Francis S. Collins accepted most of the recommendations of an independent advisory committee for implementing a set of principles and criteria developed by the Institute of Medicine regarding the use of chimpanzees in NIH-funded research.

"Americans have benefited greatly from the chimpanzees' service to biomedical research, but new scientific methods and technologies have rendered their use in research largely unnecessary," Dr. Collins said. "Their likeness to humans has made them uniquely valuable for certain types of research but also demands greater justification for their use.

"After extensive consideration with the expert guidance of many, I am confident that greatly reducing their use in biomedical research is scientifically sound and the right thing to do."

The NIH will maintain a colony of up to 50 nonbreeding chimpanzees for potential biomedical research needs. The remaining chimpanzees could eventually join more than 150 chimpanzees that are already in the Federal Sanctuary System managed by Chimp Haven.



Courtesy of Chimp Haven

While accepting most of the recommendations on the ethologically appropriate facilities for the unretired chimpanzees, the NIH cited a lack of scientific consensus regarding the recommendation that the primary living space of research chimpanzees be at least 1,000 square feet per chimpanzee. The agency will consult with chimpanzee behavior and facilities experts to determine the appropriate minimum space requirement for research chimpanzees.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recently issued a proposed rule that lists captive chimpanzees as endangered. The NIH said the agency expects to adapt its policies for research projects using chimpanzees to comply with the conservation guidelines the USFWS establishes in a potential final rule.

FDA to increase oversight of imported drugs

The Food and Drug Administration plans to increase oversight of the rising portion of pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical ingredients made outside the U.S.

About 40 percent of drugs and 80 percent of active ingredients are imported, according to the agency. The FDA has been challenged by increases in drug importation, complex and fragmented global supply chains, and increasing threats of fraudulent and substandard drugs, the agency said in a June 19 Federal Register notice.

That notice was published in advance of a meeting July 12 during which the FDA hoped to receive ideas on how to develop standards for admitting drugs into the U.S. as well as how to develop standards on collecting information from importers, registering them, and establishing preferred importer practices. In expanding oversight, the agency is citing authority gained through passage of the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act in July 2012.

The meeting notice indicates the FDA is determining the kind of proof that should be required of importers to show sufficient inspection by their home governments and the safety and

effectiveness of their products, what practices importers should be required to follow, and what importer registration is needed. For example, the FDA questioned whether importers should be required to provide certificates that ensure the identity of drug components as well as to prove the certificate issuers are reliable. The notice also includes questions from the FDA on how the agency could allow expedited importation of drugs from companies deemed to be reliable.

Christopher C. Kelly, a spokesman for the FDA, said in early June the agency was reviewing comments on the planned increase in oversight, and agency officials did not know when draft regulations would be available.

Information on the subjects under consideration are available in the meeting notice at <https://federalregister.gov/a/2013-14549>.

Community

Lincoln Memorial gets green light from AVMA council

Lincoln Memorial University College of Veterinary Medicine in Harrogate, Tenn., received a letter of reasonable assurance of future accreditation from the AVMA Council on Education after members took a vote during a July 2 conference call.

This first step in the AVMA accreditation process puts the LMU veterinary college on target for provisional accreditation with the acceptance of its first class of 85 students in fall 2014 and for full accreditation in 2018 at the time those first students are graduating. The college has joined the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges' Veterinary Medical College Application Service. Estimated annual tuition will be \$41,000, which is comparable to rates for other U.S. veterinary colleges.

Dr. Randall K. Evans (AUB '87) will serve as the veterinary college's dean. In 2011, Dr. Evans was chosen as the founding dean of the emerging veterinary college after serving as the founding dean of the School of Allied Health for four years. In addition, he was director for 19 years of Lincoln Memorial's veterinary



Lincoln Memorial University's 140,000-square-foot math and science building, which opened in 2012, will host lectures and research for its new College of Veterinary Medicine.

technology program, which is accredited by the AVMA Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities.

Lincoln Memorial is a nonprofit, private, liberal arts institution located on a 1,000-acre wooded campus where Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia meet at the Cumberland Gap.

LMU has abandoned plans to offer an accelerated six-year program combining the preveterinary and veterinary curricula, but it plans to recruit preveterinary students to its campus as soon as this fall semester. For the first three years of the veterinary curriculum, students will be taught in a 140,000-square-foot math and science building, which was completed in 2012 at a cost of \$30 million. One floor will be dedicated to instructional laboratories and classrooms. Another floor will house research facilities.

In addition, the college has a large animal facility located on a farm in Lee County, Va. And, the veterinary college will partner with the University of Kentucky Department of Veterinary Science's Gluck Equine Research Center.

Fourth-year students will spend their time at off-campus distributive clinical sites similar to the model found at the Western University of

Health Sciences College of Veterinary Medicine in Pomona, Calif.

The institution is in the process of recruiting faculty, with department chair positions the first to be filled.

Promotions announced at USDA

Dr. Gregory Parham was sworn in June 12 as assistant secretary for administration for the Department of Agriculture. Dr. Parham had served as acting assistant secretary for the past year and previously as administrator of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.



Dr. Gregory Parham

Following Dr. Parham's promotion, Kevin Shea was appointed head of APHIS on June 18.

Dr. Parham served as APHIS' associate administrator from November 2009 until his appointment as administrator in 2011. He worked closely with program heads to provide leadership and direction in science while focusing special attention on international and trade activities.

Prior to his role as associate administrator, Dr. Parham spent two years as

the deputy administrator for Marketing and Regulatory Programs—Business Services. In this capacity, he was responsible for providing resource management and administrative services to support the objectives of APHIS, the Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Grain Inspection and Packers and Stockyards Administration.

Dr. Parham joined APHIS in March 2006 as the agency's chief information officer and provided leadership related to the agency's information technology initiatives. He began his federal career in 1980 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service officer with the U.S. Public Health Service at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Parham joined the USDA in 1982 and worked for several department agencies, including the Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Extension Service. He earned his DVM degree from The Ohio State University in 1980 and holds a master's from Johns Hopkins University in administrative science.

Before Kevin Shea's appointment as APHIS administrator, he had served as the agency's associate administrator since 2004. Starting in 2000, he was deputy administrator for Policy



Kevin Shea

and Program Development, providing leadership for the overall planning and direction of policies, programs, and activities at APHIS as well as being responsible for the agency's budget, regulation development, and environmental compliance programs.

From 1992-2000, Shea was APHIS' director of budget and accounting. Earlier in his career, he worked as a budget analyst, chief of the Program Analysis Branch.☞