

# Veterinary Research News

## Shelter medicine recognized as veterinary specialty

Dramatic advances in the science and practice of shelter veterinary medicine have occurred since the first courses on shelter animal health were taught in veterinary colleges in the 1990s.

In less than two decades, shelter medicine has evolved into a distinct field of veterinary practice drawing on a wide range of disciplines.

Training in shelter medicine is now offered at most North American veterinary colleges along with several postgraduate internships and residencies, while hundreds of hours of continuing education on the subject are presented at veterinary conferences every year. The Association of Shelter Veterinarians, which began as a grass-roots movement in 2001, today claims more than a thousand members, including some 700 veterinarians, and has student chapters in 22 veterinary colleges.

So it was no surprise when the AVMA Executive Board on April 11 voted unanimously in favor of granting provisional recognition to the Shelter Medicine Practice specialty within the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, on a recommendation from the AVMA's American Board of Veterinary Specialties.

Dr. Kate Hurley oversees the shelter medicine program at the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. She is amazed at how quickly the field of shelter medicine has evolved, from its fragmented and marginalized beginnings to recognition by the American Board of Veterinary Specialties.

Dr. Hurley started the world's first residency in shelter medicine at UC-Davis in 2001. "I was the first person crazy enough to undertake a residency in shelter medicine when there was no clear path for what that would mean," she said.

That path would eventually lead Dr. Hurley to co-chairing the committee that in 2012 would formally petition the ABVS for recognition of shelter medicine as a veterinary specialty. Her co-chair, Dr. Brenda Griffin, said that, unlike conventional small animal practice and its focus on individual patients, shelter medicine must address the well-being of entire populations of captive dogs and cats in the context of unique shelter environments.

"Shelter medicine is a very, very unique blend of population and individual health care," said Dr. Griffin, a professor of shelter medicine at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine.

Demand for long-term shelter of homeless animals has increased in recent years, Dr. Griffin explained, putting these populations at greater risk of contracting infectious disease, developing problem behaviors, and having their welfare compromised.

The role of veterinary medicine within the animal shelter commu-

nity has historically been limited to neutering animals and treating the ill. One of the new veterinary specialty's goals is to increase veterinary guidance within the animal shelter community and provide science-based recommendations that protect the health and welfare of millions of homeless animals.

A shelter medicine specialist will be able to optimize shelter animals' physical health; enhance shelter animal behavioral health; protect community and public health; alleviate companion animal homelessness; address animal cruelty, abuse, and neglect; facilitate animal shelter management; serve as a resource on animals and public policy; and advance the practice of shelter medicine.

The inaugural examination for specialty certification in shelter medicine is scheduled for November 2015. The application deadline is September 2014, and the credentialing deadline is January 2015. For more information about the examination or the Association of Shelter Veterinarians, visit [www.sheltervet.org](http://www.sheltervet.org).

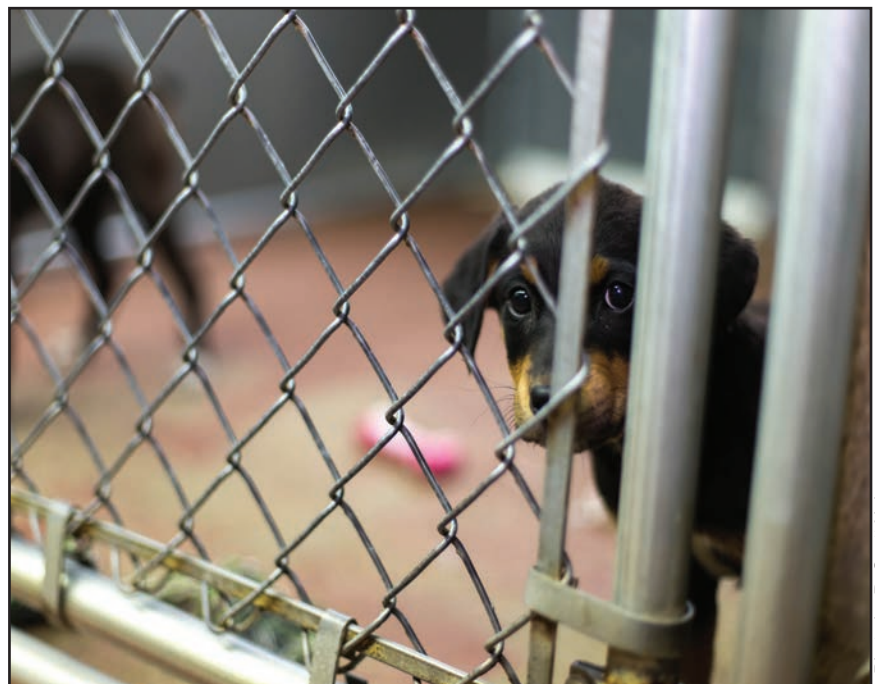


Photo by R. Scott Nolen

## New equine dentistry specialty a go

Equine dentistry has become one of the newest veterinary specialties to be recognized by the AVMA.

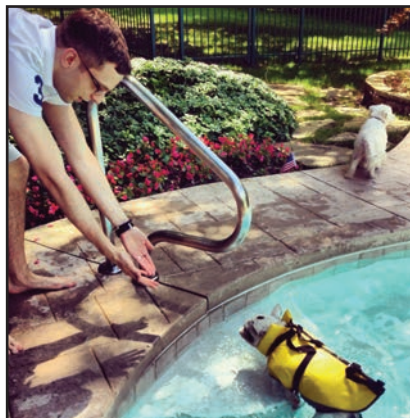
At its April meeting, the AVMA Executive Board approved a petition from the equine dentistry organizing committee to receive provisional recognition as a specialty within the American Veterinary Dental College. Prospective members may now become diplomates after fulfilling the requirements.

Representatives of the proposed specialty initially submitted a letter of intent to the AVMA's American Board of Veterinary Specialties in January 2012. Near the end of 2012, the group submitted a petition for recognition to the ABVS Committee on the Development of New Specialties, and the petition was opened for public comment. In September 2013, the equine dentistry group submitted a full petition and response to public comments to the ABVS for consideration. At its February meeting, the ABVS approved a motion to recommend provisional recognition of Equine Dentistry within the AVDC to the AVMA Executive Board.

Dr. Ed Murphey, an assistant director of the AVMA Education and Research Division, said one of the criteria for recognition as a new specialty is whether the field represents a distinct facet of veterinary medicine and is substantiated by a sizeable volume of scientific evidence. Equine dentistry met that threshold not only because of the anatomic differences between horses and other animals but also because of the number of continuing education opportunities, book chapters, published papers, and courses offered at veterinary colleges in this area, he said.

## Pet health insurance helping pet owners afford care

Pet health insurance has grown more popular since its introduction in the United States three decades ago, although its use is still not widespread. About 2 percent of U.S. dog and cat owners hold policies, according to a Packaged Facts consumer market research report from October 2013.



Courtesy of Veterinary Pet Insurance

Last Fourth of July, Pierre the French Bulldog fell into a pool and later ate some cookie dough. He received treatment for shock and gas. His owners keep a closer eye on him now, have bought him a life vest, and continue to maintain his policy with Veterinary Pet Insurance.

The policies remain more similar to automobile or homeowners insurance than to human health insurance, with most companies in the industry reimbursing pet owners for veterinary care following treatment of a pet for an accident or illness.

The AVMA policy "Pet Health Insurance" starts by stating: "The AVMA endorses the concept of pet health insurance that provides coverage to help defray the cost of veterinary medical care. The AVMA recognizes that viable pet health insurance programs will be important to the future of the veterinary profession's ability to continue to provide high quality and up-to-date veterinary service."

One trend in pet health insurance is branding under other names to play off the popularity of those brands. These names include Geico, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and Wal-Mart in Canada.

Another trend is pet health insurance becoming an employee benefit. Employers don't pay part of the premiums but do offer a discount on premiums by contracting with a pet health insurer.

A 2013 survey by the North American Pet Health Insurance Association found that pet health insurance continues to grow. Participating members reported a mean annual increase in gross revenue from written premiums of about 13 percent from 2008-2012.

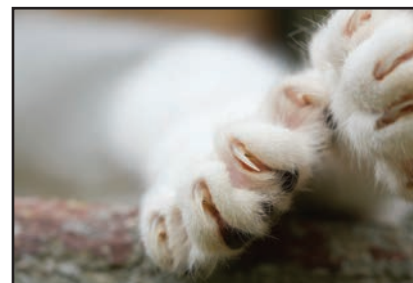
## Resolutions, bylaws amendments going to HOD

The AVMA House of Delegates will consider six resolutions and three amendments to the AVMA Bylaws during its regular annual session, July 24-25 in Denver, preceding the AVMA Annual Convention.

The AVMA Executive Board submitted a new version of the AVMA's Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics as a resolution with a recommendation for approval. The Judicial Council has spent more than a year reformatting the principles and incorporating input from AVMA members.

Two competing resolutions would revise the policy on "Pregnant Sow Housing." One was submitted by the board, at the recommendation of the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee, and the other was submitted by the Humane Society VMA.

The board sent another revised policy from the Animal Welfare Committee, this one on "Declawing of Domestic Cats," to the HOD with a recommendation for approval. Among other things, the revisions clarify that onychectomy is a major surgical procedure in cats.



Further, the board referred a revised policy on "Judicious Therapeutic Use of Antimicrobials" with a recommendation for approval. The Food Safety Advisory Committee has spent the past year updating the policy language to provide consistency and harmonization with other AVMA policies and with those of allied organizations.

Plus, a revised policy on "Veterinary Dentistry" submitted by the AVMA Council on Veterinary Service was referred by the board to the HOD with a recommendation for approval. Revisions were made for clarity and to include language that addresses equine dentistry.

And finally, the board submitted three proposed amendments to the AVMA Bylaws for consideration by the House. Two proposed changes to governance would provide for AVMA members to elect about half the delegates in the HOD (with the state VMA or allied organization designating each second delegate) and reduce the term length of board members from six years to four. Another amendment would add a veterinary student as a nonvoting member of the AVMA Council on Research.

### Hub offers resources, continues conversation on animal welfare



The AVMA launched a comprehensive Web hub on animal welfare April 26 in celebration of World Veterinary Day 2014, which focused on the theme of animal welfare.

The hub at [www.avma.org/animalwelfare](http://www.avma.org/animalwelfare) offers a collection of AVMA resources on animal welfare such as policies and literature reviews. The hub offers information on aspects of animal well-being such as proper breeding and selection, housing, nutrition, management, disease and injury prevention and treatment, and humane handling.

Also via the hub, members of the AVMA and Student AVMA can join The Conversation, a dialogue on animal welfare that began in November 2013 during the in-person intraprofessional program "Can You Hear Me Now? The Conversation."

The AVMA's Animal Welfare Conversation is a LinkedIn members-only group that provides opportunities to

share information and conduct conversations with colleagues about animal use and care. In addition, AVMA and SAVMA members can access the audiovisual proceedings of the in-person program from the new hub.

### AVMA seeks to refocus through strategy management

The AVMA has embarked on an in-depth evaluation of what members want and need from their national veterinary association.

In January 2014, the leadership of the Association launched the AVMA Strategy Management Process, a comprehensive evaluation and planning effort. President Clark K. Fobian and CEO Ron DeHaven wrote about the process in a March 18 email message asking AVMA members to participate in the effort. During its April 10-12 meeting, the AVMA Executive Board received an update on the process and discussed the next steps.

The Strategy Management Process was undertaken to reshape the AVMA to meet the challenges of a new competitive environment, including changes in member demographics; a possible decline in member satisfaction as member wants, needs, and expectations change; and an erosion in the percentage of U.S. veterinarians who are members, from about 85 percent down to about 80 percent, even as membership has been growing.

Early in the year, the board had approved retaining LBL Strategies to consult on the Strategy Management Process and 88 Brand Partners to consult on branding and marketing. During its April meeting, the board approved retaining Atomic Access to consult on digital strategy. The board took these actions to supplement existing expertise and accelerate the process.

By year's end, the Strategy Management Process will result in a three-year strategic operating plan.

The AVMA has created a website at [www.avma.org/newcourse](http://www.avma.org/newcourse) to serve as an information resource for members and stakeholders about the Strategy Management Process. The site will feature regular progress updates.

### WHO warns of 'post-antibiotic era'

The world could enter a post-antibiotic era in which common infections and minor injuries can kill, according to Keiji Fukuda, MD.

Dr. Fukuda, the assistant director-general of health security for the World Health Organization, made that statement in a WHO report, "Antimicrobial resistance: global report on surveillance 2014," which was published in April and calls for coordinated global action to improve surveillance for antimicrobial resistance and increase sharing of data on resistance.

The report states that data from several countries indicate oral treatment options are limited for common community-acquired infections, and few treatment options remain for common severe and health care-associated infections in many places.

The report uses data provided by 114 countries on resistance found in nine combinations of pathogenic bacteria and antibacterial drugs, chosen because they represent common infections and treatments. Examples of those combinations are resistance among *Escherichia coli* isolates to third-generation cephalosporins and resistance among *Staphylococcus aureus* isolates to methicillin.

Resistance of *Klebsiella pneumoniae* to the carbapenems class of broad-spectrum antimicrobials, reported in all WHO regions, is particularly concerning, the report states.

The data collected by WHO show that, in some countries, more than 50 percent of isolates of some bacteria are resistant to the drugs commonly used to treat infections. For example,



The mannitol-salt agar medium in this culture plate changed from red to yellow with growth of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.



at least one country each in five of the six WHO regions reported finding that degree of resistance to fluoroquinolones among *E coli* isolates.

### Speakers sought for AVMA's 'Humane Endings' symposium

The AVMA is inviting researchers to submit abstracts for consideration as presentations or posters at the 2014 AVMA Animal Welfare Symposium, Nov. 2-5 at the Westin O'Hare, near Chicago O'Hare airport.



The symposium is titled "Humane Endings: In Search of Best Practices for Euthanasia, Humane Slaughter, and the Depopulation of Animals." Abstracts should clearly relate to those functions or to the harmonization of voluntary guidance and regulations. Topics of interest can include recent research findings, reviews of research in a defined area, or discussions of voluntary or regulatory oversight.

July 15 is the deadline for submitting abstracts to humaneendingsabstracts@avma.org or to Humane Endings, Animal Welfare Division, AVMA, 1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100, Schaumburg, IL 60173. The author or a co-author must present the work at the symposium. The registration fee will be waived for the presenter.

For complete submission guidelines and more information about the event, visit [www.avma.org/humaneendings](http://www.avma.org/humaneendings) or call Kathy Sikora, (800) 248-2862, ext. 6635.

### Education council schedules site visits

The AVMA Council on Education has scheduled site visits to four schools and colleges of veterinary medicine for the remainder of 2014.

Site visits are planned for the University of Utrecht Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in the Netherlands, Sept. 21-25; Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, Oct. 4-9; Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Oct. 26-30;

and Oniris Ecole National Vétérinaire in France, Nov. 16-20 (consultative site visit).

The council welcomes written comments on these plans or the programs to be evaluated. Comments should be addressed to Dr. Karen Martens Brandt, 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.

### Annual meeting of AVMA voting members announced

The AVMA Executive Board approved holding the 2014 annual meeting of AVMA voting members in conjunction with the regular annual session of the House of Delegates this July in Denver.

The meeting of AVMA voting members will take place from 11-11:30 a.m. July 24 as part of the HOD Informational Assembly and House Advisory Committee candidate introductions from 8-11:30.

### Horse tripping a new welfare concern

The AVMA has come out against the practice of horse tripping, which involves roping the front or hind legs of a galloping horse while on foot or horseback, causing it to trip and fall for entertainment purposes. The AVMA Executive Board approved a policy in April voicing its opposition.

Horse tripping, a long-standing tradition in Mexican-style rodeos ("char-

readas"), has been on the Association's and the American Association of Equine Practitioners' radar the past few years after AVMA and AAEP members voiced their concerns about the practice.

The practice has been banned in 11 states. However, attempts to circumvent animal cruelty regulations continue at county and local events, according to the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee, which made the recommendation.

Typically three events during a charreada include horse tripping; points are awarded for how quickly the "charro," or roper, can rope the horse.

Reported horse injuries include lacerations, dislocated joints, fractured bones, and teeth, neck, and shoulder injuries. Additional concerns that have been expressed are that the horses used for these rodeos are underfed, overused, and repeatedly roped until lame, sometimes with rope burns down to the bone.

The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association and the National Professional Rodeo Association have prohibited the intentional tripping of horses at their sanctioned events. The Charro Federation USA, which oversees larger charreadas, has penalties for charros who trip horses.

In February, the AAEP board of directors approved a new position on the use of equids in entertainment that included the AAEP's opposition to horse tripping. 🇺🇸

