

## Letters to the Editor

### Shared thoughts on foreign body migration and extrusion

I read the article titled "Foreign body attachment to polypropylene suture material extruded into the small intestinal lumen after enteric closure in three dogs" (*JAVMA*, December 1, 2004, pp 1713–1715) with interest. I too have had problems with foreign body extrusion, but in an experimental model rather than clinically. While working with a gene therapy laboratory a few years ago, I developed a method for the implantation of retrovirally transduced smooth muscle cells between the serosa and muscular layer of the rat stomach. This method used a permanently implanted stainless steel or polytetrafluoroethylene stent to hold a space open between the serosa and the muscle layer of the stomach.<sup>1</sup> During initial experiments, all these implants failed because of extrusion into the stomach within two weeks of implantation. Histologically, it appeared that the implant was displaced into the lumen by the regrowth of the muscle layer, forcing the implant into the lumen of the stomach (data not published). Regrowth of the muscle layer appeared to originate from the serosa and was directed inward in all cases, suggesting the serosa as the source for undifferentiated smooth muscle cells capable of quickly replacing damaged muscle layer. Freezing the serosa overlying the implant using liquid nitrogen ablated this response. Although it is not stated in my paper, this is the reason for freezing the serosa prior to injection of the cells. Freezing the serosa prevented extrusion and resulted in an implant that was incorporated in the wall of the stomach for the lifetime of the rat. This in turn permitted long-term survival of the implanted smooth muscle cells.

Although this work was done in rats, it would appear that the authors of the *JAVMA* article have observed the same phenomenon. During initial

failures, I had loops of suture form as well, although I was using 5-0 polyglyconate rather than a polypropylene suture. These loops were of little clinical consequence and were observed during necropsy only. In these cases, the suture knot located outside the serosa appeared to serve as an anchor. This is consistent with the observation of a knot located on the serosal side of the anastomosis site. Taken together, these data suggest that 1) the serosa is a reservoir for undifferentiated smooth muscle cells in the intestinal tract and 2) material placed between the serosa and the muscle layer is doomed to eventual extrusion into the lumen by regrowth of this muscle. While I am not advocating freezing the serosa surrounding an enteric closure site, I believe it would be prudent to either reassess the use of nonabsorbable materials when placed between the serosa and muscular layer of the gastrointestinal tract, as these might form a permanent loop in the lumen, or to attempt to place the entire length of the closure material, including the knot, under the serosa during closure and expect this material to eventually migrate into the lumen during healing.

Daniel V. Lejnieks, DVM  
Seattle, Wash

1. Lejnieks DV, Ramesh N, Lau S, et al. Stomach implant for long-term erythropoietin expression in rats. *Blood* 1998;92:888–893.

### The author responds:

The authors wish to thank Dr.

Lejnieks for his insightful research perspectives on transmural foreign body migration and extrusion in the gastrointestinal tract.

Milan Milovancev, DVM  
Norwalk, Conn

### Linking consumer trust with the prosperity of the profession

I enjoyed Dr. Whitford's commentary, "Future prosperity depends on consumer trust," in the December 15, 2004 *JAVMA* (pp 1824–1825). Our profession certainly faces great challenges. A profession is not a static thing and must change and respond to survive. To flourish, a profession must address fundamental consumer needs while maintaining its alignment with its primary purposes. Members of the veterinary profession gained their high public esteem by protecting animal health and delivering excellent quality service to consumers. We work hard to bring the best healing techniques to our patients. But past good works do not maintain public opinion, and efforts to improve our profession must be ongoing to result in genuine improvement of animal and human health that will be valued.

Prosperity depends on consumer trust. Consumer trust is earned when excellent results are delivered by competent and compassionate professionals who take time to be sure their clients understand what is happening.

### Instructions for Writing a Letter to the Editor

Readers are invited to submit letters to the editor. Letters may not exceed 500 words and 6 references. Not all letters are published; all letters accepted for publication are subject to editing. Those pertaining to anything published in the *JAVMA* should be received within one month of the date of publication. Submission via e-mail ([JournalLetters@avma.org](mailto:JournalLetters@avma.org)) or fax (847-925-9329) is encouraged; authors should give their full contact information including address, daytime telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address.

Letters containing defamatory, libelous, or malicious statements will not be published, nor will letters representing attacks on or attempts to demean veterinary societies, their committees or agencies. Viewpoints expressed in published letters are those of the letter writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the AVMA.

Consumers are becoming more and more intelligent and well informed. The days of the authoritarian doctor and ignorant, compliant client are long over. Veterinarians must be willing to work as hard as their clients to find and implement the best methods of healing if we are to maintain our position of esteem. This means entering areas that may seem unfamiliar at first. Fortunately, the opportunities for continuing education are greater than ever. Holistic and conventional medical and surgical material are available at all major conferences, and specialty meetings are open for all to attend.

To be truly successful and respected, new professionals must be broadly educated, communicate well, and be able to respond to consumer requests for further information. He or she must be able to integrate different systems of thought and data analysis to determine the best treatment plan for the pet and client.

When I graduated from veterinary school 21 years ago, I read an edition of *JAVMA* that mentioned the need for veterinarians to change and lamented the declining condition of our profession. That doom and gloom pervades every age. Truthfully, for those who work hard, do their jobs well, and work constructively with others, our profession has a bright future. We all depend on the results of our colleagues. Our clients depend on us to do our work and be professionals, not just highly paid technicians or sales staff for pharmaceutical companies. If veterinary medicine continues to emphasize effective results, prolonged survival of our patients, and improved quality of life, then we can rest assured that prosperity and consumer respect will result.

Reality is what is, and advertising is what is promised. Providing services that align promises and deliver results generates prosperity. Clients are willing to pay for such service, and the proof is that successful practices coordinate these factors nicely. As long as clients are our final quality control, we can be assured of continuing success even though our profit centers may change in the process.

*Richard E. Palmquist, DVM  
Inglewood, Calif*

## **Importance of public engagement found through involvement in Horse Slaughter Bill**

Stereotypes of academicians fumbling their way through occasional interviews are seeded as deeply in our consciousness as their antithesis—slick politicians whose ability to manipulate public opinion belies their ignorance of the issues. Public engagement, we opine, is an art better left to career politicians. Such reservations certainly characterize veterinary medicine, whose constituents have historically eschewed the public eye, often failing to advertise the extraordinary measure of their actions. This tendency toward self-effacement is not always politically expedient in a world whose currency is the word.

Such thoughts crowded my mind as I found myself on the doorstep of the AVMA Governmental Relations Division. As a student extern, I was to spend four weeks on Capitol Hill. I questioned the trajectory that landed me there. My resume boasts no experience with organizational politics, and the careful tact required of a politician has been conspicuously absent from my character at times.

Enlightenment arrived in the guise of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. The bill, a lightning rod for controversy, would outlaw the slaughter or transport for slaughter of horses intended for human consumption—a fate known to some 70,000 horses per year in the United States, whose meat is subsequently exported to foreign markets. Debate covered the humaneness of transport conditions and slaughter methods, the rigidity of regulatory enforcement, the extent of available resources to care for unwanted horses, and the appropriateness of human consumption of horse meat.

Conversations with congressional staffers revealed a dramatic incongruity in the representation of veterinarians and animal protection groups. While the two camps do not have to be mutually exclusive, they often are. And regardless of which side of this issue readers find themselves, the dangers of this separation are manifest. Depending on whom you poll, the bill's passage would either end decades of animal suffer-

ing or exponentially increase that suffering by inundating existing infrastructure with thousands of animals for which we could not care. Either scenario seems important enough to merit our involvement.

Logically, veterinarians should steer such policy deliberately and knowledgeably, for what is ethically defensible in principle may not be ethically defensible in practice. If we do not ensure the latter, who will?

In her inaugural address, AVMA president Dr. Bonnie Beaver trumpeted the cause of animal welfare and the importance of veterinarians as the ultimate authorities on animal welfare.

Thus, the importance of the word sometimes matches or exceeds the merit of the deed. The polity's strength lies with its constituents. It is incumbent upon young veterinarians to maintain involvement with organized veterinary medicine, not only to bridge the widening chasm within the profession, but to extend a guiding hand to the public. I don't fancy myself a politician, but this much was evident from my four weeks in Washington—the political process is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. Acknowledging it as such might lessen the diffidence of individuals whose introversion steers them away from public engagement. I should know. I'm one of them.

*John Rossi  
University of Pennsylvania  
Class of 2005*

*Editor's note: See News article on AVMA externs, page 339.*

## **Seasoned professional seeks veteran qualities in younger colleagues**

As I read the commentary by Dr. Dorsey (*JAVMA*, December 15, 2004, pp 1827–1828), I thought, at last, a younger colleague who loves his profession and his clientele, disregards the completely profit-motivated advice of so many practice consultants, and emphasizes service and the practice of the best possible medicine he is capable of!

Then I read that, like me, he had graduated over 40 years ago.

Alas!

*Robert M. Miller, DVM  
Thousand Oaks, Calif*