

Letters to the Editor

Community service on behalf of animals

Thank you to the *JAVMA News* for spotlighting the “Pets for Life—A New Community Understanding” report produced by the Humane Society of the United States.¹ The Pets for Life program continues to address the needs of at-risk animals that might not otherwise receive veterinary medical care.

In addition to the information detailed in the *JAVMA News* article, the report highlights the fact that reduced-cost care often serves as a family's entry point into the veterinary medical care system. Just as there are food deserts in low-income urban and rural communities, there are also animal care deserts. As veterinary professionals, we have an opportunity to close the gap between people's love for their pets and the availability of services.

Multiple barriers to veterinary medical care, such as cost, lack of transportation, and lack of knowledge, are addressed in the report. In these difficult economic times, means testing can be yet another barrier to veterinary care for such clients, and because means testing is simply income verification, it may not accurately reflect the complexities of a clients' expenses or competing priorities.

According to the report, increasing access and removing cost barriers to animal care and veterinary services for pet owners in underserved areas will not only reduce overpopulation in animal shelters but also improve overall community animal health.

There are countless opportunities for veterinary professionals to help animals and their owners, and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association offers many opportunities to engage in community service on behalf of animals. We call on all of our colleagues in the veterinary profession, including veterinarians, veterinary technicians and assistants, and veterinary students, to get involved and

proactively collaborate with animal welfare service providers, including shelters and rescue groups. These stakeholders are not competitors but potential partners. Expanding our collective outreach can only benefit the health and welfare of our communities' animals.

Readers can learn more about the Pets for Life program at humanesociety.org/petsforlife and review the full report at humanesociety.org/pflreport. They can learn more about our service efforts and how to get involved at hsvma.org.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA
Humane Society Veterinary
Medical Association
Davis, Calif

1. Report details methods for helping low-income pet owners. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2012;240:917.

Duty to act as advocates for animals

I was disappointed to read in a recent *JAVMA News* article¹ that Iowa had passed House File 589, which gives law enforcement officials in Iowa the opportunity to pursue criminal charges against individuals who gain access to agricultural facilities through deception or false statements. I fear that this new law is little more than an attempt to prevent animal advocacy organizations from secretly filming animal cruelty and neglect on farms in the state.

I believe that organizations that identify and record animal abuse are performing a service for the animal agriculture industry, our profession, and the general public. We need to know where abuse occurs so that it can be stopped. I wholeheartedly agree with the argument from Paul Shapiro of the Humane Society of the United States that “undercover investigations...have exposed otherwise hidden cruelty to animals.”

I also agree with the statement from Craig Hill of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation that “many actions by farm owners or employees can be unfairly portrayed to those unfamiliar with animal handling practices.” However, this objection speaks more to a lack of education on animal agriculture than to a need to ban filming. Much of what the general public knows about animal agriculture comes from the media, where animal agriculture is too often demonized. However, if we continue to allow animal abuse to occur, we must live with the consequences of our inaction. We cannot improve the perception of animal agriculture among the general public by merely hiding problems.

I call on the AVMA to oppose the passage of similar legislation in other states. We have a duty to act as the advocates for animals. The public needs responsible reporting about animal abuse in our animal

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. Letters to the Editor must be original and cannot have been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. 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) 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 or 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.

agriculture industry. House File 589 only sweeps it under the rug.

Judith LaBounty

Class of 2014

Center for Veterinary Health Sciences

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Okla

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1. Cima G. Iowa outlaws lying to enter farms. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2012; 240:919–920.

Benefits of dental radiography

I read with interest the What is Your Diagnosis? article in the May 15 issue of *JAVMA*.¹ The case involved a young Labrador Retriever with a history of facial trauma as a puppy, nasal discharge, and a missing permanent maxillary canine tooth. Computed tomography was used to determine the cause of the

nasal discharge and the missing tooth.

Although the article does not mention whether intraoral radiography was performed, a missing tooth or teeth is generally considered to be an indication for the use of intraoral radiography. This is an accurate diagnostic method to determine whether missing teeth are a result of congenital absence or lack of eruption, or represent displaced or embedded teeth.

In another recent What is Your Diagnosis article² involving a dog with a cutaneous sinus tract in the cervical area secondary to a dental lesion, CT was again used for diagnosis prior to intraoral radiography. The authors listed the benefits of dental radiography for diagnosis and treatment of sinus tracts when compared with CT. These are the same benefits when using intraoral radiography in establishing a diagnosis for missing

teeth: lower cost, wider availability, lower dose of radiation used, and shorter anesthetic time. Because dental radiography is often adequate for diagnosis and treatment planning in animals with mucosal and cutaneous sinus tracts in the region of the maxilla and mandible and in the diagnosis and treatment of missing teeth, use of CT should be reserved for more complex cases. The time has come for dental radiography to be part of standard education for veterinary students.

Sharon Hoffman, DVM, DAVDC

North Florida Veterinary

Dentistry and Oral Surgery

Jacksonville, Fla

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1. Crochik SS, McGill J. What Is Your Diagnosis? *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2012; 240:1165–1167.
 2. Buelow ME, Sullivan M, Matheson J, et al. What Is Your Diagnosis? *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2011;239:1419–1421.