



Photo by R. Scott Nolen

Temple Grandin, PhD (center), a member of the AVMA Panel on Humane Slaughter, talks with colleagues at the AVMA Humane Endings symposium this past November.

AVMA issues guidance on humane slaughter

The AVMA is expected to soon release the second in a three-part series of recommendations for veterinarians on providing animals with as humane a death as possible. The latest document addresses preventing pain and distress in animals slaughtered for food.

The AVMA Guidelines for the Humane Slaughter of Animals is an evaluation of methods, techniques, and agents used for killing hoofstock, poultry, rabbits, fish, and alligators designated to be used for food in accordance with the federal Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act.

It is estimated that between 10 and 15 percent of the U.S. veterinary profession is involved in promoting the health and welfare of animals that will eventually become food.

The 171-page document is the work of the AVMA Panel on Humane Slaughter, which consists of more than 15

individuals, including veterinarians, animal scientists, and an animal ethicist. Over two years was spent reviewing scientific literature and formulating the recommendations, marking the first detailed guidance the AVMA has provided on humane slaughter.

The guidelines contain species-specific information for terrestrial and aquatic species commonly farmed and slaughtered for food. Additionally, every stage of the slaughter process is addressed, from the point of offloading to the animal's death. The guidelines include information related to regulations, oversight, and training related to slaughter; design of the slaughter facility and movement through the facility; techniques used for slaughter; unique species issues in the slaughter environment; and religious slaughter.

Neither the morality of killing animals for food nor the methods and techniques used in hunting or raising animals for fur or fiber are covered in the guidelines.

"The panel worked hard to develop a set of guidelines that ensure the treatment of animals at every stage of the slaughter process is as humane and as respectful as possible," said Dr. Steven Leary, chair of both the AVMA Panel on Humane Slaughter and the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia.

The guidelines state that violations of the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act must not be tolerated. Animals should be treated with respect at all stages of the slaughter process, and compromises to animal welfare should be treated as unacceptable, if not unlawful.

Practitioners and stockpersons should ensure the following:

- No conscious animal is dragged, shackled, hoisted, or cut inappropriately. Before invasive dressing begins, all signs of brainstem function, such as the corneal reflex, must be abolished.
- Excessive force or frequent use of electric prods to move animals off trucks, up and down ramps, or into slaughter facilities or restraint devices is avoided. Animals should not be forced to move faster than a normal walking speed. Handlers should move animals quietly.

- Nonambulatory or disabled animals are isolated and moved with suitable equipment and provided appropriate veterinary attention. Conscious nonambulatory animals must never be dragged.
- Terrestrial animals are provided with access to water in the lairage pens; animals should have sufficient room to move in accordance with state, federal, and local statutes; and pens should have room for all the animals to lie down.
- Slaughter facilities and equipment are well-maintained to minimize injury or pain to the animals and employees.
- The induction of unconsciousness causes minimal distress to the animal.
- All personnel are trained in both the application of stunning methods and behavioral principles of animal handling.

When publishing activities are complete, the AVMA Guidelines for the Humane Slaughter of Animals will be available as a free PDF on the AVMA website at www.avma.org/animalwelfare through the "Humane Endings" tab. The guidelines will also be available as an e-book from the AVMA's page on Smashwords, www.smashwords.com/profile/view/avma. ●

Condensed from Feb. 1, 2015, JAVMA News.

Congressional session in review

Several AVMA-supported bills promoting animal health and welfare and advancing the veterinary profession were passed into law during the two years of the 113th Congress, which ended in early January.

Additionally, Drs. Kurt Schrader of Oregon and Ted Yoho of Florida were re-elected to the House of Representatives, where they'll be joined by another veterinarian, Dr. Ralph Abraham, who won a runoff election in Louisiana's 5th Congressional District in December 2014.

Legislative victories for the veterinary profession include passage of the Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act and Animal Drug and Animal Generic Drug User Fee Reauthorization Act as well as funding for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, Food Animal Residue Avoidance

Databank, and Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program.

Several bills the Association endorsed didn't make it to the presi-



dent's desk, however, notably the Prevent All Soring Tactics Act, which would ban the inhumane practice of soring walking horses to induce them to lift their legs higher and faster in the show ring. Despite support from more than 300 House members and nearly 60 senators, the PAST Act was stalled by a few elected officials in key positions and by the introduction of an alternative bill, the Horse Protection Amendments Act. Because of this opposition, the PAST Act never made it to the floor for a vote in either chamber.

Learn more about the AVMA's legislative agenda at www.avma.org in the Advocacy section under "National Issues." ●

Condensed from Feb. 15, 2015, JAVMA News.

Practices rely on surveys for client feedback

Seventy-two percent of veterinary practices rely on surveys for client feedback, according to a November 2014 survey of 272 members by the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association.

Respondents who do not survey clients gave the following reasons: low response rates from past survey efforts, 33 percent; insufficient resources, 26 percent; not enough time, 21 percent; and surveys are too costly, 6 percent.

Among respondents who surveyed clients, more than half requested feedback following an office visit. Other respondents surveyed clients sporadically. A small percentage turned to surveying clients when the practice was interested in feedback on a specific topic or when the clients were new.

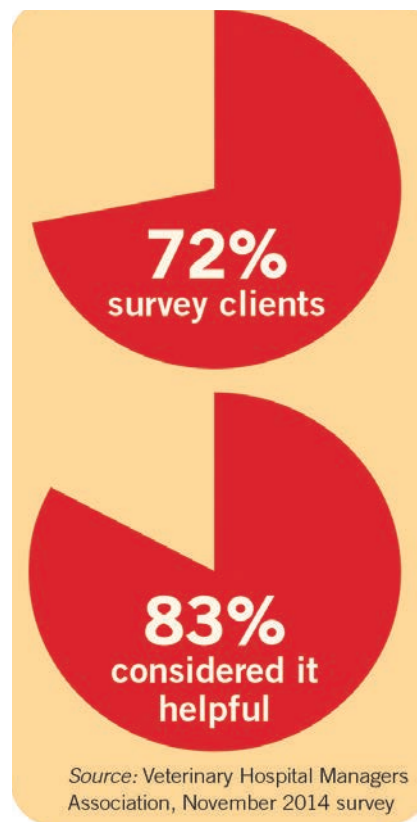
Sixty-nine percent of respondents who administered surveys did so electronically. Although 23 percent used paper surveys, the method of distribution was divided evenly between mail-

ing the survey form and handing the survey to the client in the office.

In an open-ended question, respondents reflected on how survey results have affected their practice. They said surveys have provided information that has been used to implement office changes, served as the foundation for a dialogue with staff about office matters, and contributed to better staff morale. Only 12 percent of respondents who surveyed clients regarded the results as insufficient to effect meaningful office change.

Eighty-three percent of respondents who surveyed clients considered the results helpful in evaluating current policies, procedures, and practices. Twenty-three percent reported sharing the results with staff during staff meetings. Twenty-one percent described the results as a way to identify and address trends. ●

Condensed from Feb. 1, 2015, JAVMA News.



AVMA president denounces 'attack' articles on veterinarians

AVMA President Ted Cohn has denounced what he described as attack articles on the veterinary profession. Dr. Cohn's comments were prompted by independent stories published by The Indianapolis Star and Reuters this past December.

The first in the Star's three-part "Pets at Risk" series questions whether pets are safe under the federal approval process for animal drugs. The second suggests corporate money influences veterinarians' decisions regarding treatment options for their pet patients, and the third questions veterinary opposition to emotional damages for pet loss.

Dr. Cohn wrote a letter to the Star editor stating the series was offensive to veterinarians, "who are committed



AVMA President Ted Cohn

to promoting, preserving and protecting the health of our pets."

"While you tried to paint a picture of veterinarians being beholden to pharmaceutical companies for monetary gain, you failed to cite even one specific case of impropriety or lack of professionalism," he stated.

He also responded to an item by Reuters news agency titled "Vets face conflicting loyalties to animals, farmers—and drug firms" questioning the integrity of veterinarians working in food animal medicine, industry, and academia.

The AVMA supports full disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest, as is stated in the Association's Code of Ethics, Dr. Cohn noted. Additionally, the AVMA would be happy to work with federal officials in drafting legislation that would increase transparency and eliminate any perceptions of impropriety within the veterinary profession. ●

Condensed from Feb. 15, 2015, JAVMA News.

As time goes by

The opening session of the American Association of Equine Practitioners' Annual Convention, Dec. 7, 2014, in Salt Lake City, had a nostalgic feel. This past year, the organization celebrated its 60th anniversary, so during the opening session, there



was a video message from Dr. Robert Copelan (Ohio State '53), the only surviving founding member among the 11 inaugural members.

The convention, held Dec. 6-10, attracted 5,534 attendees. The AAEP currently has 7,725 veterinary members and 1,325 student members.

Dr. Copelan's message at the opening session was followed by keynote presenter Dr. G. Marvin Beeman (Colorado State '57), founding and emeritus partner at the Littleton Equine Medical Center in Littleton, Colorado. The focus of Dr. Beeman's talk was to encourage equine veterinarians to "practice equine veterinary medicine and have fun doing it for a long time." His mantra is: "When the little things are done well, the big things happen. And the big things motivate us to learn more and do better."

The Kester News Hour further touched on recent advancements in equine medicine as the presenters provided information on noteworthy scientific discoveries and innovations from the past year. All Equine Veterinary Journal and Equine Veterinary Education articles discussed in the Kester News Hour are being offered free online for a limited time.

Also during the convention, Dr. G. Kent Carter (Colorado State '79) was installed as 2015 AAEP president. He is a large animal medicine professor at Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences. ●

Condensed from Feb. 15, 2015, JAVMA News.

Horse racing model rules see gradual adoption

It's been almost two years since the association of state racing regulators, the Association of Racing Commissioners International, voted to adopt the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium's National Uniform Medication Program, which has four components.

By early this year, at least 16 states will have in place the Controlled Therapeutic Medication Schedule, which lists thresholds and recommended withdrawal times for 26 commonly used legal substances; 23 states are using only RMTC-accredited laboratory testing services and an external quality assurance program for their equine drug and medication testing services; the multiple medication violation penalty system will have nine adopting states; and the number of states requiring third-party administration of furosemide on race day will be at least 16.

That's not to say that the process has gone along completely without conflict or confusion. A common misconception has been that there is zero tolerance for drugs not listed on the Controlled Therapeutic Medication



Trainers and veterinarians who work with Standardbreds are worried about the withdrawal time for corticosteroids outlined in the National Uniform Medication Program because this horse breed competes more frequently than any other—as often as every week.

Schedule, for example. Other areas of ongoing conflict created by the model rules have centered on clenbuterol and its 14-day withdrawal period before race day, intra-articular administration of corticosteroids not being allowed within seven days of a race, and whether the third-party administration requirement violates the veterinarian-client-patient relationship established in some state veterinary practice acts.

Given the contentious atmosphere and questions about the RMTC's integrity, the ARCI believes it has a solution: it's requesting that the RMTC merge with an ARCI committee. Regulators say doing so would streamline the process of rule making in the areas of medication policy and testing standards. ●

Condensed from Feb. 15, 2015, JAVMA News.

Million Cat Challenge aims to rescue shelter cats

Two shelter medicine programs have launched the Million Cat Challenge to reduce the loss of life among cats in North American animal shelters over five years, according to a December announcement.

The Koret Shelter Medicine Program at the University of California-Davis and the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida launched the 2014-2018 challenge with support from animal shelters and other animal welfare organizations. Organizers hope to extend the challenge to municipal animal control facilities and private shelters of all sizes.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the United States alone is home to more than 13,600 community animal shelters, including municipal shelters, private shelters, and rescues. These shelters annually receive about 7.6 million companion animals. About 3.4 million of those animals are cats, and 1.4 million of the cats are euthanized each year. The ASPCA figures are based on various estimates.

Organizers designed the Million Cat Challenge to decrease those numbers by helping animal shelters implement one or more of the following five initiatives:

- Finding alternatives that will keep cats in homes or the community rather than in shelters.
- Managing admission to correspond with a shelter's ability to provide safe, humane care.
- Matching the number of cats in a shelter at any given time with that shelter's capacity to ensure the animals' welfare.
- Removing barriers to adoption such as cost, processing, and location.
- Returning to the field rather than euthanizing healthy, unowned cats once they have been sterilized and vaccinated.

For more details, visit www.millioncatchallenge.org. ●

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Research sheds new light on deadly bat fungus

The devastating impact of white-nose syndrome on bat colonies in eastern North America is due in part to the seasonal dynamics of infection and transmission, according to a new study led by scientists at the University of California-Santa Cruz. "Host and pathogen ecology drive the seasonal dynamics of a fungal disease, white-nose syndrome" was published Dec. 3, 2014, in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences (<http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/>).

Researchers discovered that the *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* fungus can infect nearly every bat in a colony during the winter while the bats are hibernating. Bats that survive the winter are able to clear the infection during summer when their body temperatures are increased, which prevents fungal growth. Yet the high infection rate during hibernation leads to greater mortality rate at a time when bat populations are naturally at their lowest, before the females give birth in the summer.

The study provides the first description of the dynamics of fungal infection and transmission in bats. The findings are in striking contrast with most infectious diseases, according to senior author Marm Kilpatrick, PhD, associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at UC-Santa Cruz.

"For many diseases, population density and social interactions play a big role in transmission, but these bats are

actually very social and live in dense colonies in both summer and winter," he said. "In this case, transmission is tied to hibernation and body temperature. When the bats start hibernating, it's almost like they become petri dishes for this fungus to grow on." ●

Condensed from Feb. 1, 2015, JAVMA News.



Little brown bats in a New York hibernation cave exhibit white fungal growth on their muzzles.

Photo by Nancy Heaslip, New York Department of Environmental Conservation

Stories of pregnancy in practice

Veterinarians face risks and other challenges while pregnant in practice, but they find ways to handle the trials and tribulations. Six practitioners shared their stories for the Feb. 15 issue of *JAVMA News*.

Among them is Dr. Emily T. Luisana (North Carolina State '10), who was still a veterinary student when she had her first child.

She found out she was pregnant three weeks into her fourth year. She rescheduled her on-call rotations before her due date and radiology afterward.

Day-to-day reality was harder, starting with the morning sickness. Later, being on her feet and lifting patients became difficult. Once, after a long day of rotations, she had an internal debate on the couch at home when she was hungry but her feet hurt too much to walk to the kitchen.

Dr. Luisana had her son in early 2010. She returned to rotations after six weeks and was proud to graduate only a month late.

She was working at a small animal practice in North Carolina when she had her second child, a daughter born in June 2013.

During her second pregnancy, she took more steps to make life easier and safer. These included sitting down during appointments, napping every lunch hour, and postponing certain radiographic procedures. She avoided tasks that made her nauseous, induction of and recovery from anesthesia, fractious patients, and potential carriers of zoonoses.

She said, "Overall, I think veterinary medicine is not unfriendly to pregnancy. But besides workplace hazards, we also have to contend with ourselves. Veterinarians tend to have a Type A personality. We work hard and equate skipping lunch with job commitment. So it's a transition to start taking care of yourself during a busy workday in the many little ways pregnancy requires you to—and another challenge to verbalize that to an employer or co-worker." ●

In late 2013, Dr. Luisana began partnering with her childhood veterinarian, who is looking to retire, as co-owner of Pet House Calls in Raleigh, North Carolina. They both work part time, allowing Dr. Luisana more time to spend with her children.

Condensed from Feb. 15, 2015, JAVMA News.



Photo by John Luisana

Dr. Emily T. Luisana during her second pregnancy

Association offers handout on cat declawing



The AVMA has created a handout for cat owners who are considering having their cats declawed, in hopes of helping veterinarians connect with clients to make the best decision for each cat and household.

The AVMA Animal Welfare Division worked with members of the AVMA Animal

Welfare Committee and feline practitioners to develop the resource.

The handout addresses scratching as a normal behavior in healthy cats, declawing as a major surgery that requires aggressive pain management under the care of an experienced veterinarian, alternatives to declawing that should be tried prior to performing the procedure, and situations in which declawing might be an appropriate option.

The AVMA strives to provide veterinarians with resources that will help them advocate for their patients' welfare and facilitate client education. The handout and other resources on declawing—a video, AVMA policy, and literature review—are available at www.avma.org/declaw. ●

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