Reflections and inspirations: my year as your AVMA president


As I pen my final President’s Column, these are just a few words that immediately come to mind as I reflect on my experiences over the past year. Serving our association as your president has been one of the greatest thrills of my life. I thank you for your support and encouragement. I enjoyed meeting so many of you, and I hope our paths will soon cross again.

We have accomplished much together. First, we have reached an important membership milestone. The AVMA is now more than 91,000 strong, which translates to three out of every four U.S. veterinarians. Member retention continues to trend upward, and the latest AVMA Performance Survey shows that satisfaction is up and more AVMA members are recommending that other veterinarians join their national association.

The AVMA is building on its efforts to cultivate our next generation of leaders with the continued success of events like the Veterinary Leadership Conference and innovative initiatives like our Future Leaders program. In July, we will be launching a new microsite for students and recent graduates that provides career, financial, and wellbeing resources. This is just one of many tools that our present and future veterinarians need to become successful leaders in the profession.

The AVMA continues to help address shortages within the federal veterinary workforce. Our advocacy team in Washington, D.C., was instrumental in securing increased funding for the Food Safety and Inspection Service that includes $7.5 million directed toward public health veterinarian recruitment and retention.

We continue to be a champion of the one-health initiative. We have taken important steps to help veterinarians prevent the spread of antimicrobial resistance through the AVMA’s Antimicrobial Stewardship Definition and Core Principles policy. The AVMA has published its first-ever global food security policy, which will guide us as we work to help convene experts who are committed to achieving global food security. And we are working with both chambers of Congress to ensure a timely passage of a Farm Bill that protects veterinary priorities.

When it comes to the wellbeing of our friends and colleagues, we are making tremendous progress in better understanding the issues facing our members and how the AVMA can best help address them. Our veterinary wellbeing summit in April was an opportunity for participants to engage in critical conversations and explore ideas they can implement in their own lives, to enhance both their personal wellbeing and their workplace cultures. Your growing interest in wellbeing strategies motivates us to seek out resources and share what we know through our AVMA@Work blog and at conferences across the country.

Whew! If this seems like a lot, it is. And perhaps now you can see why my year was so great in so many ways. I am inspired and moved by each member of the veterinary community I meet, and I am convinced now more than ever that the future of our profession is bright. My gratitude and thanks to each one of you for everything you did to make my term as president so memorable, and for helping make our profession the best it can be.

As I bid farewell to my term as AVMA president, I welcome Dr. John de Jong. His passion for everything that is veterinary medicine will serve us all well. He is anxious to get to work in building on our remarkable progress, and I look forward to working with him and with all of you as we strive to advance veterinary medicine for the benefit of the animals and people we serve.

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I want to hear from you. Please reach out to me with your comments, questions and concerns at presidentscolumn@avma.org.