

May 2024 | trends.aaha.org



Trends

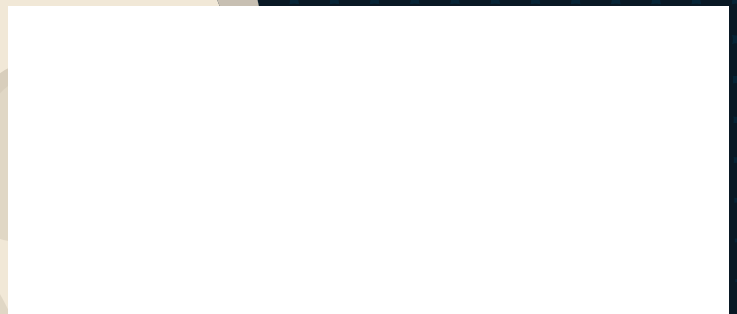
magazine

Healthy Wallet, Healthy Mind

The Link Between Finance
and Mental Health, 32

VET MED, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

Underpaying Staff Is Not An Option, 26





Reclaim your time with better software.

Running a veterinary practice successfully means achieving a difficult balance – between managing the day-to-day business and delivering the best clinical care. On top of that, you hope it leaves time for life outside of the practice.

Make every day run smoother with Provet Cloud, the all-in-one veterinary software that prioritizes simplicity, ease, and efficiency – so you can get home sooner.



Find out why Provet Cloud's fully customizable suite of automations and integrations is the trusted solution of over 30,000 veterinary professionals worldwide.

Visit provet.cloud to learn more.



INTRODUCING

 **PURINA**
PROPLAN[®]
VETERINARY
SUPPORT
MISSION

There are A MILLION REASONS you love
what you do, and we want to help.

That's why we've dedicated
\$1,000,000
to help you care for pets in need.

Visit ProPlanVetSupport.com to learn more. →



Purina trademarks are owned by Société des Produits Nestlé S.A.

Trends

AAHA

magazine

Vol. 40, No. 5, May 2024

American Animal Hospital Association

trends.aaha.org • trends@aaha.org

14142 Denver West Parkway,
Suite 245, Lakewood, CO 80401

Phone: 800-883-6301

Fax: 303-986-1700

Trends magazine provides timely perspectives on the art and business of companion animal veterinary practice to all members of the practice team.

The Team

Editorial Director

Ben Williams

Managing Editor

Cara Hopkins

Senior Graphic Designer

Robin Taylor

Graphic Designer

Alison Silverman

Veterinary Content Specialist

Emily Singler, VMD

Director of Guidelines

Ingrid Taylor, DVM

Accreditation Specialist

Aimee Potter, RVT

Copywriter

Kristen Green Seymour

Senior Content Manager

Connor Dunwoodie

National Sales Manager

Stephanie Pates

Advertising and Sales Manager

Sean Thomas

Advertising and
Sponsorship Specialist

Jennifer Beierle

Journal Highlights Highlights from the current issue of *JAAHA, Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association*, are reprinted with permission. For masthead information, editorial review board, authors' guidelines, and subscription information, see the online publication at aaha.org or jaaha.org.

Subscriptions *Trends magazine* is provided to AAHA members as a member benefit (annual membership dues include \$60 for a subscription). Annual nonmember subscriptions: \$70. Single copies: \$20. To subscribe, call 800-883-6301, email aaha@aaha.org, or visit aaha.org/trends.

Publication in this magazine of any advertisement, article, product information, or other information or data does not necessarily imply that the American Animal Hospital Association endorses or approves the advertiser, the product, the service, or the authors' viewpoints. The information presented is intended to help you make good decisions, but it is not a replacement for appropriate financial, legal, or other advice. Neither this publication nor AAHA in any way endorses or guarantees the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of the facts, views, opinions, recommendations, information, or statements contained in this publication. In addition, nothing within these pages should be construed as an offer or solicitation to purchase or sell any investment items. Readers are urged to consult their attorneys, accountants, and other advisors on all practice-related decisions. No part of this issue may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher. The sole exception is made for veterinary practices, which may make a limited number of copies for use within the practices. For all other uses, including all uses by commercial entities, please send your request to permissions@aaha.org. AAHA shall not be held liable for adverse reactions to or damage resulting from the application of this information or any misstatement or error contained in this work. AAHA shall be held harmless from any and all claims that may arise as a result of any reliance on the information provided.



Trends magazine® (ISSN 1062-8266) is published monthly by the American Animal Hospital Association, 14142 Denver West Parkway, Suite 245, Lakewood, CO 80401. Periodicals postage paid at Golden, Colorado, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Post Agreement Number 40041253; send change of address information and blocks of undeliverable copies to P.O. Box 1051, Fort Erie, ON L2A 6C7. Printed in the USA. Postmaster: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2); NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to *Trends magazine*, 14142 Denver West Parkway, Suite 245, Lakewood, CO 80401.

©2024 American Animal Hospital Association.

All rights reserved. Cover image: ©AAHA/Robin Taylor

Midmark transforms care environments for the **benefit of all.**

We make high-quality equipment designed to support your practice and help create better care experiences for everyone—from staff to patients to clients.

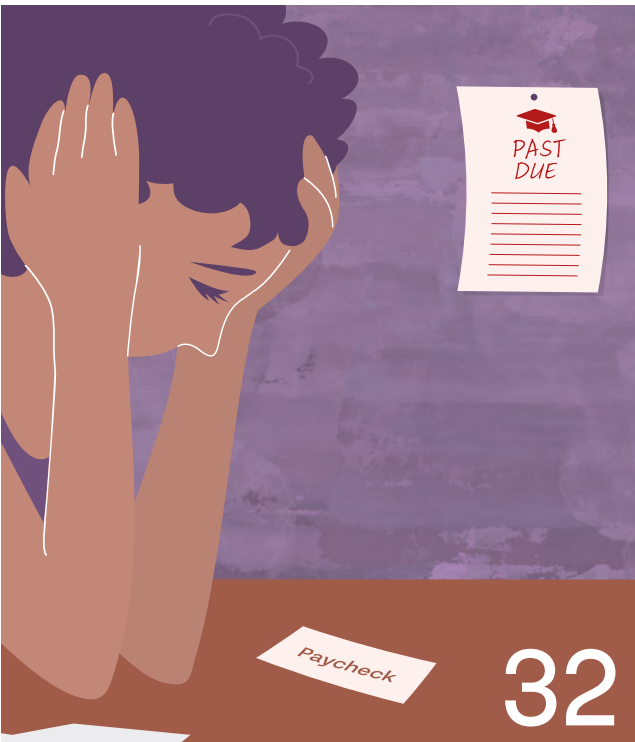
Midmark meets the needs and opportunities of today's veterinarians through a combination of fully-integrated product lines, superior quality equipment, facility design expertise, online and in-clinic training, technical support and client educational tools.

- Anesthesia
- Boarding and Containment
- Cabinetry
- Dental Delivery and X-ray
- Exam, Treatment and Surgery Tables
- Instrument Processing
- Lighting and Scales
- Monitoring
- Scrub Sinks and Grooming Tubs
- Seating



To learn more visit [midmark.com](https://www.midmark.com)
or call 1.800.Midmark.


midmark[®]
Designing better care.



Features

26

Vet Med, We Have a Problem

Fair compensation is a top driver of staff attrition. What can be done?

by Kristen Green Seymour

32

Healthy Wallet, Healthy Mind

Financial worries can be a significant cause of stress and that stress can affect wellbeing.

by Maureen Blaney Flietner

Departments

40 Get Smart

Laser Focused

Is a surgical laser a valuable tool or an expensive toy?

44 Tech Support

AI and PIMS

AI has many applications, including being an aid for SOAP notes.

52 Home Team

Epic Wins

What is an epic win and how can you foster it?

54 Podcast

Senior Dogs, Super Moms, and Singular Service

A conversation with Julie Buzby, DVM



The Usual

- 6 From the Editor
- 8 Contributors
- 11 View from the Board
- 12 The Scoop
- 18 5 Questions for a Specialist
- 22 Employee of the Month
- 24 JAAHA
- 62 Advertiser Index
- 63 AAHA Marketplace
- 64 In Practice



From the Editor

Failure Is Not an Option

The US space program is full of great stories about problem solving. Most people are familiar with the famous line from the Apollo 13 mission, “Houston, we’ve had a problem.” (In the 1995 film, *Apollo 13*, this was shortened to “Houston, we have a problem” because it sounded more dramatic.) The point is, when there is a crisis, true professionals know how to respond. And vet med, like NASA, is filled with true professionals.

I thought this month’s cover story, by AAHA’s award-winning copywriter Kristen Green Seymour, perfectly captured that spirit of crisis that I believe will eventually lead to an innovative and life-saving solution. In this case, of course, we are not talking about an exploding cryo-tank full of liquid oxygen. We’re talking about a livable wage for veterinary staff. Like many lingering problems in this profession, it is sticky and complicated, but I have faith that, in the end, we’ll find a way to make it work.

In a similar vein, our second feature is about the link between financial health and mental health. The article features interviews with financial experts and coaches, as well as tips on how to improve your financial literacy.

Nominate Your Employee of the Month

Do us all a favor and head over to aaha.org/EOTM to nominate one of your co-workers for the Employee of the Month contest, and you could win \$100 for yourself and \$400 for your nominee. The only catch? There is no catch; it’s free to enter, and you get free money!

Coming Next Month

June is our Pride Issue, and we’ll talk about building the team of the future, the value of having employees who speak a second language, and a look at what it means to be “professional” in this day and age.

As always, let me know what you think at trends@aaha.org.

A handwritten signature in dark teal ink that reads "Ben Williams". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Ben Williams
Editor

80% of Dogs Suffer from Dental Disease¹

A Scientifically Proven Dental Chew² For Successful At-Home Dental Care


WELLNESS

WHIMZEES

— Crafted to Support the —

4 Areas Vets Check Most³:

- ✓ Plaque
- ✓ Tartar
- ✓ Gums
- ✓ Breath



THE ADDED BENEFITS OF WELLNESS[®] WHIMZEES[®] DENTAL CHEWS:

- **CHEWS LONGER FOR MORE CLEANING TIME⁴**
With added dietary fiber, WHIMZEES Dental Chews provide a firmer dental chew that supports a longer chewing time for a longer cleaning time.
- **JUST 6 KEY NATURAL INGREDIENTS**
A limited ingredient recipe with no added grains or meat proteins supports the dental health of all dogs, including the sensitive ones.
- **A LOW-CALORIE DENTAL TREAT⁵**
As a low-calorie dental treat, WHIMZEES help pet parents give their dog a daily dental chew to supports dental health without having to worry about their waistslines.

Helping pet parents create a daily dental health routine between cleanings is key to supporting their dog's teeth and gum health.

¹ Packaged facts "Pet Care Oral Services and Products in the US" 2018; PLoS One Stella JL, Bauer AE, Croney 2018.

² When chewed daily. Based on WHIMZEES Brushzees medium breed dog study at an independent kennel 2022.

³ When chewed daily. ⁴ Based on studies of a comparable product conducted by an independent kennel.

⁵ Excludes WHIMZEES Ricebone, Puppy and Antler.



Just for Vets!



Contributors



Kristen Green Seymour

Kristen Green Seymour is a copywriter at AAHA, and when she's not writing about how veterinary practices can improve staff retention, you can often find her snuggling with her senior pets or doing something fun and active outdoors.



Maureen Blaney Flietner

Maureen Blaney Flietner is an award-winning writer and illustrator living in Wisconsin. Flietner is a long-time contributor to *Trends*.



Scott Krick, DVM

Scott Krick, DVM, graduated from Cornell Veterinary School in 1987. He has trained veterinarians in laser surgery and was the primary investigator for 10 FDA clinical trials. Krick is currently the technical services veterinarian for companion animals at Norbrook, Inc.



Aaron Smiley, DVM

Aaron Smiley, DVM, is chief of staff at Devonshire Veterinary Clinic in Anderson, Indiana. He is the co-founder of VetSOAP, an AI software that improves animal care and practice efficiency. Smiley also helped found the Veterinary Virtual Care Association and currently serves as its co-chair.



Jason Szumski, DVM

Jason Szumski, DVM, graduated from the University of Illinois in 2023. He co-founded VetSOAP with Aaron Smiley, DVM. Szumski works at a 24/7 emergency/general practice clinic in the suburbs of Chicago.



M. Carolyn Miller, MA

M. Carolyn Miller, MA, is an award-winning writer and employee development consultant and thought leader. Her 30-year career as a narrative/instructional designer harnessed her “game brain,” love of learning, and deep knowledge of story. Find her at cultureshape.com.



putting allergies to rest



Our delicious, expanded portfolio supports long-term results for food & environmental allergies — so everyone can rest easy.

- 1 Derm Complete — the only clinically tested nutrition for both food and environmental allergies (among leading therapeutic brands in North America)
- 2 NEW z/d low fat — highly digestible hydrolyzed soy protein for dogs with concurrent food and fat sensitivities

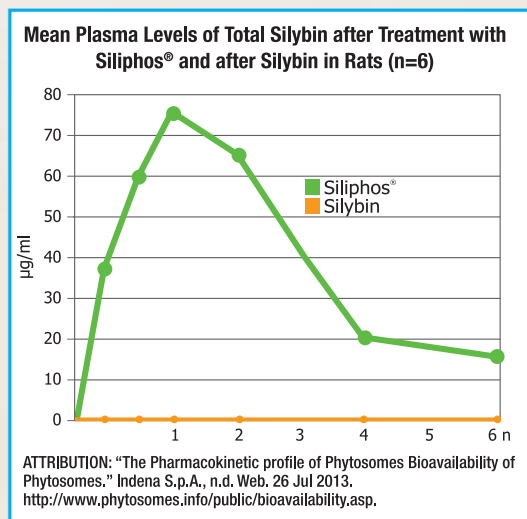
SCIENCE DID THAT.

See why vets are choosing ProHepatic®!

ProHepatic® is a potent antioxidant combination that provides liver function support in **cats and dogs**. **ProHepatic®** is beneficial for pets taking NSAID's too.

Includes Siliphos®, an exclusive complex of silybin + phosphatidylcholine.

- Small tablets can easily be given with food
- Competitively priced
- Fewer side effects than SAME
- More bioavailable than milk thistle, other silybin
- 100% guaranteed



Main ingredients:	Lg Dog	Med Dog	Cat/Sm Dog
Siliphos® (33% Silybin)	180mg (59mg)	90mg (29mg)	45mg (15mg)
Bioflavanol	40mg	20mg	10mg
Zinc	4mg	2mg	1mg

Amounts are per tablet.



Buy 3, get 1 FREE!

Offer is kind-for-kind from May 1-31, 2024.

To place an order, contact your distributor representative or AHO.

No flavoring in the Cat & Small Dog formula allows for a very small and easy-to-administer tablet.



The Science of Antioxidants™
Since 1990

Request a free sample or product information at
800-845-8849 or
www.animalhealthoptions.com

Siliphos® is a trademark of Indena S.p.A.
©2024 Animal Health Options





Veterinary Software

As a child from a family of veterinarians, I've had the privilege of watching the veterinary industry evolve over the past 40 years. The changes that I've witnessed have improved patient outcomes—whether it be from advances in surgical techniques and equipment, the development of new medications, or a patient-centric approach to handling care. However, no changes have made quite the impact, or had the ability to fundamentally improve patient care, as much as the improvements in software and data capture.

From a historical perspective, even as recently as the 1980s, paper records were considered sufficient to capture rudimentary data. The emphasis was placed on treating animals based upon first principles, rather than capturing and utilizing information in the clinic. As computer applications have evolved from simple DOS and

Windows-based operating systems, through to cloud-based servers, smart collars, and the use of AI, we now have the potential to capture and document every transaction or event that takes place during the life of a pet. This volume of data is being harnessed in ways that were previously thought impossible, even a few years ago.

When I graduated from vet school, the phrase “Evidence Based Medicine (EBM)” was de rigueur—rightly so. We were taught how to research, critically appraise, and apply knowledge based upon the work of our esteemed colleagues in academic practice. Back then, we could not have imagined how easy it would become to assimilate data, deliberately and passively, in a general practice setting. Software innovations have solved the issues of collecting, documenting, and protecting the record of events in our patients' lives. The challenge for veterinary medicine

is now what do we do with this evolving trove of data, how do we meaningfully extract and extrapolate trends, and apply them to improve patient outcomes?

As we look to the future, AI shows tremendous promise in its applications for both veterinary and human medicine. These tools are becoming more widespread and readily available, and we are reaching a point where the results of studies can be published in a matter of months, rather than years. Whilst we aren't quite at the point of asking AI to produce our clinical diagnosis, we are already seeing it used to augment patient care and extend the lives of our beloved patients. Software innovations will remain at the forefront of patient care, and I, for one, am excited to see just where the future will take us.

Robert Lawrie, MRCVS, is a member of the AAHA Board of Directors. He is chief operating officer at PetHealth Urgent Care in Reading, Pennsylvania.





The Scoop

Links Found Between Human, Canine Brain Tumors

Researchers at the Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine, and Texas Children's Hospital report that they have discovered that meningiomas—the most common type of brain tumor in humans and dogs—are extremely similar genetically.

In a release, they stated that these newly discovered similarities will allow doctors to use a classification system that identifies aggressive tumors in both humans and dogs, while also opening the door for new collaborations between human and animal medicine.

For the project, the team analyzed 62 canine meningiomas from 27 dog breeds and discovered that the tumors shared similarities to the same kinds of tumors when they occur in humans. The release states that this is the largest study to date of the gene expression profiles of canine meningiomas. The study was published in the journal *Acta Neuropathologica*.

A separate group of researchers from the University of California, Davis, conducted a similar study with matching conclusions about meningiomas in dogs and people and published their work in the same journal.

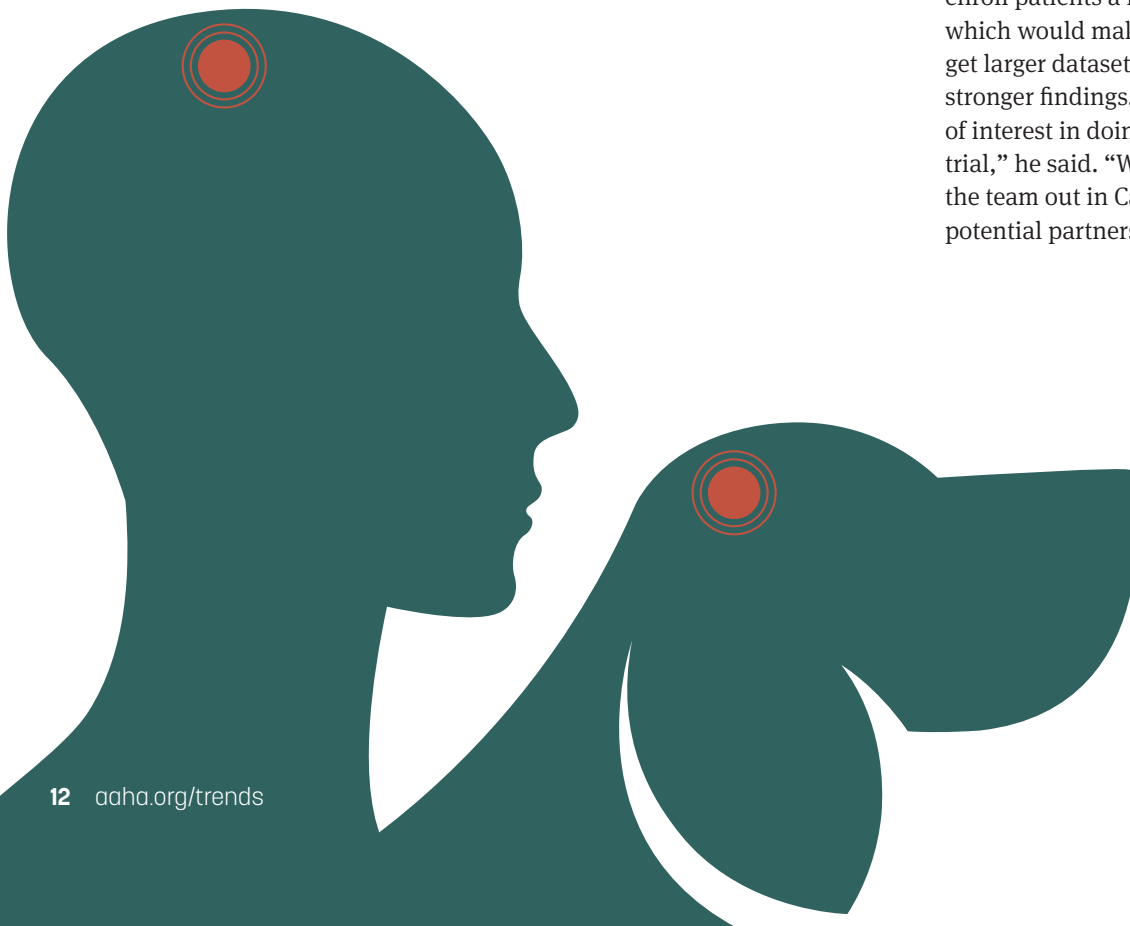


Quote of the Month

Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.

Bill Gates

“I think there is a terrific opportunity for the teams at Baylor, Texas A&M, Texas Children's, and University of California to collaborate to create a clinical trial,” said Professor Jonathan Levine, DVM, head of the Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences, and one of the lead researchers on the team. “If we do one trial, we'd be able to enroll patients a lot more quickly, which would make it easier to get larger datasets, resulting in stronger findings. So, we have a lot of interest in doing a collaborative trial,” he said. “We really see the team out in California as potential partners.”



University of Maryland Eastern Shore to Launch New Vet School

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) reports that the school’s board of regents has approved a new School of Veterinary Medicine. In a release, the school stated that final approval by the Maryland Higher Education Commission is expected shortly and a consultative visit from the American Veterinary Medicine Association Council on Education is expected to occur in the latter part of 2024.

According to the release, the program will be the second veterinary school among the nation’s historically Black colleges and universities. When the first anticipated students are accepted in fall 2026, it will also be Maryland’s first standalone program.

“Our new veterinary medicine school will help UMES fill an unmet need on the Eastern Shore and throughout the state,” said UMES President Heidi M. Anderson, MS, PhD. “Deeply rooted in our 1890 land-grant mission,

this program will enable us to serve farmers, the food industry, and the 50% of Marylanders who own a pet. It will also increase both the diversity of the profession and address the workforce needs of the industry. We’re deeply grateful to the Maryland Board of Regents, and for the widespread support this program has garnered.”

The timing could not be more appropriate, according to UMES’ Dean of the School of Agricultural and Natural Sciences Moses T. Kairo, who has helped lead the program from inception toward actualization. “In terms of demand based on labor statistics, we are looking at 19% projected growth in the field over the next seven years,” Kairo said. “Black veterinarians make up only 3% of the population in this country, indicating a tremendous need to diversify the profession.”

The university is proceeding with advocacy, fundraising, and planning for infrastructural developments, Kairo said, and



↑ Kimberly Braxton, an assistant professor and veterinarian at UMES, will hold the post until a successful search for a permanent dean next year.

an interim founding dean has been named. Kimberly Braxton, an assistant professor and veterinarian at UMES, will hold the post until a successful search for a permanent dean next year.



↑ → Students in the UMES preveterinary program



Penn Vet Launches mRNA Research Initiative

The University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine (Penn Vet) has announced the launch of an mRNA research initiative to fast-track the development of veterinary mRNA-based vaccines and host-directed therapies.

In a statement, the school said that operating under the umbrella of Penn Vet's Institute for Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases, and with support from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the initiative will advance basic vaccine science using the mRNA platform, develop mRNA vaccines that target veterinary species, and

accelerate innovation at Penn Vet using mRNA-based vaccines and therapies for a variety of diseases.

The school stated that while mRNA vaccines are efficient at stimulating antibody responses, they are less able to generate enduring lung, gut, and skin T cells that are critical for barrier immunity to many pathogens. Using Penn Vet's immunologic expertise, the first phase of the project will investigate how to generate sustained T cell-mediated immunity in the lung, gut, and skin with mRNA vaccines. Scientific findings from these basic studies

will inform the project's goal to develop veterinary vaccines, including a vaccine for avian influenza in poultry and a vaccine for viral infections in swine.

In addition to basic and translational vaccine projects, the initiative will fund at least one multi-investigator research project annually that expands the scope, furthers progress, or uses existing scholarship to accelerate mRNA research at Penn Vet. An annual symposium will also be held, providing a forum for scientists, scholars, and students to present their work.

Canine Respiratory Disease Cases Fall

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) reported on the recent outbreak of canine infectious respiratory disease complex (CIRDC), stating that the outbreak appears to be receding.

The AVMA coverage states that the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which received more than 200 case reports on the illness since August 2023, saw no new reports for the month of January. From September to November 2023, Colorado State University's (CSU) Veterinary Teaching Hospital had seen more than double the cases of canine pneumonia compared with the same period in 2022.

The AVMA reports that the most likely explanation for last year's canine respiratory disease outbreak is a commensal bacterium that possibly plays a role in some disease but has

been overlooked, according to Scott Weese, a professor at the University of Guelph Ontario Veterinary College and director of the Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses. "It doesn't seem like anything remarkable is going on at the moment," Weese said, adding that a periodic spike in CIRDC cases in various regions is to be expected.

The AVMA reports that the outbreak has raised a number of questions, among them being why last year's wave of canine respiratory disease differed from previous versions with many of these cases having other underlying health issues. Dogs experienced prolonged coughs, up to several weeks, and more cases developed what appeared to be secondary pneumonia. In addition, they say, this pneumonia was either minimally or entirely

unresponsive to antibiotics.

The lack of definitive answers has given rise to speculation that a novel pathogen or variant of a known causative agent such as *Bordetella* has emerged. Consensus within the veterinary community is this is highly unlikely. A spokesperson for the US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service told AVMA News there is no evidence to support such a conclusion.

The AVMA reports that a number of groups are researching the outbreak, including the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and Hubbard Center for Genome Studies at the University of New Hampshire, and CSU's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the Center for Companion Animal Studies.

When Dogs May Benefit from Electrodiagnostic Testing

Electrodiagnostic testing, which is more frequently used for diagnosing neuromuscular disorders in dogs, may also play a valuable role in testing for spinal disorders and cauda equina, especially when combined with advanced imaging, according to a study in *The Veterinary Journal*. This type of testing may also help improve outcomes and increase safety during complex canine spinal surgery, according to the study.

Compensation and Benefits Survey Results Announced

The Veterinary Hospital Managers Association (VHMA) recently announced the findings from its 2023 compensation and benefits survey. The survey reported on responses from 275 veterinary practices and 3,289 nonveterinarian hospital staff members.

The AVMA reports that the median salary for hospital administrators rose about 13%—from \$75,000 to \$85,000—compared to the 2021 survey responses. The median salary for practice managers increased about 8%, from \$60,000 to \$65,000.

Median salaries also increased from 2021 for other nonveterinarian staff, including office managers, receptionists, credentialed veterinary technicians (CVTs), veterinary technician specialists (VTSS), veterinary technician assistants (VTAs), kennel assistants, and bookkeepers.

“We have seen an increase in compensation in the last couple of years due to a tight supply of clinical staff. However, we have started to see that loosen up a little bit,” said Christine Shupe, executive director of the VHMA. “I don’t anticipate we will continue to see the dramatic increases we have seen in the last couple of years.”

Benefits

The most common benefit in 2023 received by nonveterinarian staff was veterinary care discounts, which 97% of surveyed practices provided, typically covering half the cost. The least common benefit received was childcare hospital expenses, which 1% of practices reported providing.

The report stated that the majority of veterinary hospitals surveyed take on some of the cost of health insurance with 45% sharing the cost of health insurance 50-50 with employees, while another 47% pay 75% to 100% of the health insurance for their staff members. Eighty-eight percent of practices surveyed offered paid time off, with median paid time off days ranging between 10 and 15 days.

The biannual survey examines the level of compensation and benefits provided to veterinary team members and the factors that can impact those levels. Survey results show the median level of wages for nonveterinarian staff members by years employed, state, and practice type.

VHMA members can download the report for free from vhma.org. Nonmembers can sign up for a nonmember account to purchase the survey.



AKC Groups Launch Canine Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation Residency Program

The American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Health Foundation (CHF), in collaboration with the AKC, recently launched the AKC/ AKC CHF Canine Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation Residency Program. In a release, they state that the program is designed to increase the number of specialists trained to meet the unique needs of athletic and working dogs, as well as all dogs in need of rehabilitation.

CHF released the first call for applications from veterinary colleges with approved sports medicine and rehabilitation programs this month. Each proposal will be reviewed by a panel of CHF leadership and subject matter experts, and the chosen institution will receive \$100,000 annually to support a three-year residency. Interested veterinary professionals will apply through the Veterinary Internship & Residency Matching Program in the spring of 2025 and start their residency training in July 2025. The release states that the program will hopefully grow to award a new residency every year, providing ongoing support for three concurrent residents.

Scientists Create Urine Test That Can Detect Cancer in Dogs

Researchers at Virginia Tech recently published a study in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, where they concluded that a type of urine test, called Raman spectroscopy, is 92% effective at detecting cancer in dogs. The test uses a laser to detect a cancerous fingerprint in the molecules of patients with cancer.

In a release, John Robertson,

a research professor at Virginia Tech's biomedical engineering department, said "That would allow us to pick up cancer when it's, perhaps, in the early stages of development and more treatable." Robertson is also a trained veterinarian and has been working the past several years to better treat and detect cancer in animals. He is part of the team that created

a rapid urine test for dogs.

The university release states that the method could be used to track how patients are responding to surgery or chemotherapy. "We'd like to be able to use the technology to monitor the effect of treatment and to be able to modify the treatment to more effectively treat the disease," Robertson said.

Photo courtesy of AVMA, Ali Kahfi/DigitalVision Vectors via Getty Images

Job Satisfaction on the Rise?

The fourth edition of the Merck Animal Health Veterinarian Wellbeing Study, a biennial series conducted in collaboration with the AVMA, explored well-being and mental health in a representative sample of more than 4,600 randomly selected US veterinarians. In this snapshot of the survey, the results show that fewer than 2.5% of practicing veterinarians under age 55 are very likely to leave veterinary medicine within two years. Although this number increases to 15% for those 65 and older, the survey states that retirement is the most likely reason for leaving in that age group.

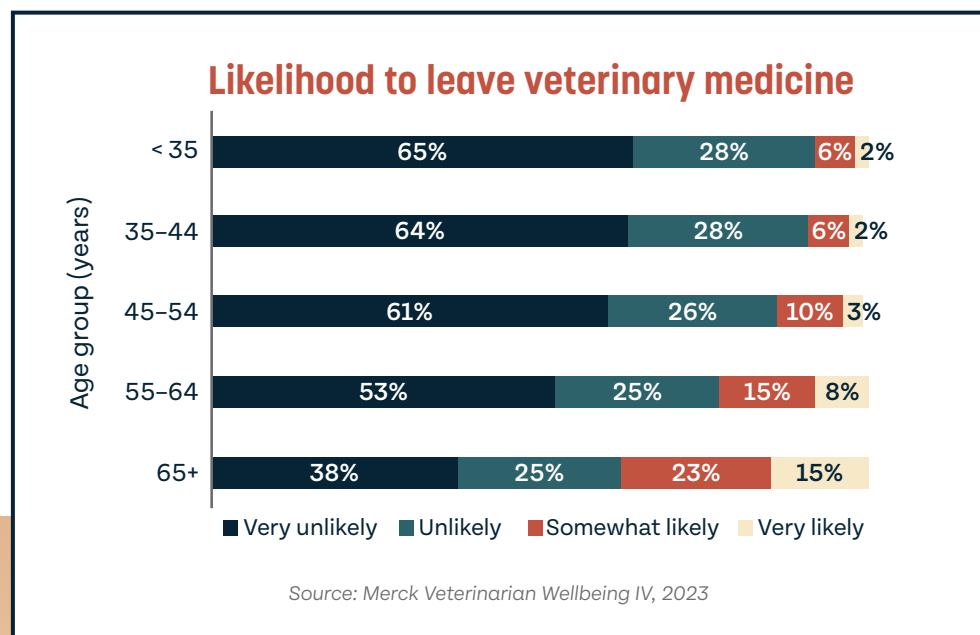
Nearly three-quarters (74%) of veterinarians express overall satisfaction with their career, and 84% agree

or strongly agree that their work makes a positive contribution to other people's lives. More than half of veterinarians say they have a high level of well-being and are flourishing in their careers.

The AVMA reports that the connection is strong between job satisfaction/retention and mental health, well-being, and burnout. They say that in terms of these

three factors, veterinarians are more accepting of the value of mental health treatment, more caring toward those with mental illness, and more comfortable discussing mental health topics with peers than they were since Merck's first veterinarian wellbeing survey in 2017.

Read more about the study at avma.org.



Cornell Wildlife Health Center Receives \$35M Endowment

Cornell University recently announced a \$35 million gift to endow and name the Cornell K. Lisa Yang Center for Wildlife Health at the university's College of Veterinary Medicine. Yang's endowment—the largest in the veterinary college's history—will expand the center's efforts “to advance science into policy and action, train future wildlife health leaders, and provide opportunities for student experiential learning,” according to a university statement.

Yang's gift will support Cornell veterinary faculty and students as well as establish the Cornell K. Lisa Yang Wildlife Health Fellows Program, which will create 14 fellowship opportunities for veterinarians, postdoctoral researchers, and graduate students.

In addition, it will be used to



↑ K. Lisa Yang

create a Catalyzing Conservation Fund—an internal grants program that will provide seed money for critical wildlife health programs led by veterinary faculty and staff—and provide five years of support to the Cornell Wildlife Health Center Student Support Fund.



← Steve Osofsky, director of the Cornell K. Lisa Yang Center for Wildlife Health, in the field in northern Botswana. A \$35 million endowment will allow the center to increase fellowship opportunities and provide seed money for important conservation programs.

→ A Cornell veterinary student and farmer examine a water buffalo calf in Indonesia.



Community

Newer Veterinarian, Looking for CE to Help Build Confidence

We have our newest veterinarian performing both dental procedures and soft-tissue surgeries, mainly just spays, neuters, and oral surgery extractions. I am wondering if you all have thoughts on how to help her build her confidence in the surgery suite and on the dental table. We have sent her to a few wet labs but we are still struggling with her confidence and I want to get her to where she can do these things on her own. Any suggestions would be helpful!

A: Dr. Beckman's Dental CE was a game changer for me as a new grad. I did not have a dentistry rotation during clinical year and felt incredibly ignorant. The CE is all online but his explanations, breakdowns, and videos are fantastic. I highly recommend it.

A: Apex Dentistry offers an amazing CE and you get to practice on cadavers as well. Worked great for all of our vets!

Share your confidence-building CE recommendations within the AAHA Community now at community.aha.org! For help, email community@aha.org.

5 Questions for a Radiology Specialist



1 What made you choose your specialty area?

As a second-year veterinary student I became captivated by radiology because it brought together my interests in medicine, pathology, and physics. It also satisfied my interest in being involved with both large and small animal medicine. I recognized that being proficient in radiology would allow me to provide better care for my patients. Then once I entered my residency program at Colorado State University, I was required to participate in the radiation therapy program headed by Dr. Ed Gillette who is considered one of the founding fathers of veterinary oncology. My training in that program resulted in my interest in radiation oncology which I brought with me to the University of Missouri.

2 What is one thing you wish you could tell general practitioners regarding your specialty?

Veterinary radiologists are there to help you do a better job of taking care of your patients and elevate your standard of practice. Over the last 50 years imaging has become so complex that it is generally beyond the scope of training that veterinarians get during veterinary school or even during an internship. Radiologists can help you decide how to get the most information for you and your clients for a reasonable cost.

Jimmy Lattimer, DVM, MS, DACVR (Radiology and Radiation Oncology)

Jimmy C. Lattimer, DVM, MS, DACVR (Radiology and Radiation Oncology), is associate professor of Radiology and Radiation Oncology at the University of Missouri Veterinary Health Center.

3 What is one thing that pet owners could do that would make your job more satisfying?

In my position in an academic tertiary referral center, probably the one thing I see often is pets who could be helped were it not for the financial constraints of the owner. So, I would recommend that owners always strongly consider having health insurance for their pets in this era of increasing care costs.

4 What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Hands down, the most rewarding part of my job is teaching veterinary students, interns, and residents the art and science of imaging interpretation. Secondly, and more important to those who are in private practice, it is very rewarding to be able to provide imaging interpretations that

provide meaningful direction to therapy. As a radiation oncologist, it is the reward of seeing an animal with a life-threatening disease get treatment that significantly prolongs their good quality life and provides pain relief for the patient and an easement of duress for the owner.

5 What advice would you give to someone considering your specialty?

If you are considering a career as a radiologist, you should be prepared to spend up to five years in post-DVM training before you finish a residency program. Currently residency programs, especially those at academic centers, are very competitive so you should do everything you can to get experience with a radiologist while in school and after you graduate—up to and including a specialty internship prior to a residency.



What is the value of telemedicine to your practice?

Embrace technology for flexibility and convenience for your staff and clients

The following is sponsored content from MWI Animal Health

The veterinary industry, like many others, has seen a dramatic shift in recent years with the rise of technology-based solutions, like telehealth. This innovative tool not only provides an effective response to staff shortages but also introduces flexibility and convenience for pet owners and your team.

Navigate staff shortages and boost flexibility

A telemedicine solution can be an effective way for veterinary practice owners to address staff shortages¹, while keeping your commitment to high-quality pet care. "The veterinarians who are already innovative in their mindset

and who look to solve problems day-to-day, they will be the early adopters," says Dr. Crista Wallis, DVM, owner of Monticello Animal Hospital in Shawnee, Kansas. She is one such innovative practitioner, having offered some form of telemedicine to her clients since before the pandemic. She advises making sure staff is aligned with the concept of telemedicine and has their questions answered before making any changes.

Telemedicine solutions offer flexibility by facilitating tasks such as communication, discussing what a patient may need to come in for and potential treatment plans, client education, and scheduling. These features help practitioners improve the efficiency of their practices without compromising patient care. Medical issues can be triaged via video consult and off-site veterinarians can alert staff in the office what to expect before the animal arrives, streamlining the intake process.

Dr. Wallis says, "We have enough data out there on telehealth now to know that it's not harmful to practice online medicine and we can use our professional minds to discern whether or not something can be treated online, or whether it needs come into the hospital." Telehealth is not intended to be a total replacement for in-person visits; but instead serves as an enhancement to those necessary consults and an additional option for certain types of visits.

Telemedicine is a valuable tool for today's veterinary practices. "I can say wholeheartedly that myself and my staff, we probably would never go back to practicing medicine without it," says Dr. Wallis.

However safe and effective telemedicine is, if the corresponding software is not set up well and there are disconnected platforms, it could end up being more time-consuming than efficient. A telemedicine solution that integrates seamlessly with existing systems, like AllyDVM's retention calendar², allows for smoother operations and better time management—a win-win situation for today's busy practitioners.



Create multiple touchpoints with clients

By integrating a telemedicine solution into practices, veterinarians can create multiple touchpoints with clients that extend beyond traditional face-to-face interactions. Offering telehealth services signifies a commitment to enhancing client relationships. In fact, according to a survey done by the ASPCA, two-thirds of pet owners would see their veterinarian more often if telehealth was an option.³ Using a telemedicine solution, veterinarians can leverage multiple touchpoints from scheduling appointments to sharing medical records and conducting video consultations. These lines of communication foster stronger relationships, improve animal care, and ensure clients feel involved in their pets' healthcare journey.

Discharge instructions are a prime example of how virtual communications can create stronger client bonds. Recording a video of post-operative care instructions for common procedures, like spay or neuter, only needs to be done once. The result can be emailed or shared on online platforms for pet parents to access as many times as they need. Staff saves valuable time when they don't need to repeat instructions, time which can be redirected to other relationship-building or revenue-building activities. Picking up a pet after a procedure can be a time for heightened emotions. When discharge instructions are documented and not just verbal, clients can review them on their own time when they are less stressed.

Pet owners embrace telemedicine

Telemedicine brings healthcare directly into clients' homes—making veterinary care more accessible than ever before. It's no wonder the demand for telemedicine among pet owners continues to rise. Clients who live in rural areas, and therefore further away from clinics; and clients who work in jobs where it's harder to take time off are just two examples of demographics that might readily use telehealth. In an era where convenience is highly valued, telemedicine provides efficient ways for busy pet owners to access healthcare for their pets. It has become more than just a trend—it reflects shifting client expectations that veterinary practices must acknowledge.

Telemedicine is a valuable tool for today's veterinary practices. It addresses the pressing issue of staff shortages while providing flexible solutions that enhance operational efficiencies. By creating multiple touchpoints, it enriches client relationships and ensures a comprehensive approach to pet care. "I can say wholeheartedly that myself and my staff, we probably would never go back to practicing medicine without it," says Dr. Wallis.

Conclusion

As the demand for such accessible and convenient services, integrating telemedicine into veterinary practice becomes more than just an innovative strategy. It's essential to meet evolving client expectations and stay competitive in this digitally advanced era.⁴

Footnotes:

¹ Tackling the Veterinary Professional Shortage, August 2023, Mars Veterinary Health <https://www.marsveterinary.com/tackling-the-veterinary-professional-shortage/>

² AllyDVM Retention Calendar <https://www.allydvm.com/solutions/retention-calendar>

³ Pet Owners Need Access to Telemedicine Amid Nationwide Shortage of Veterinarians, New ASPCA Survey Reveals, April 10, 2023, ASPCA <https://www.aspc.org/about-us/press-releases/pet-owners-need-access-telemedicine-amid-nationwide-shortage-veterinarians>

⁴ Right software, right clinic, right time, November 28, 2023, MWI Animal Health <https://www.allydvm.com/insights/right-software-right-clinic-right-time>



Embrace the future of veterinary care with AllyDVM's telehealth services

- Experience flexibility and convenience for pet owners and your team
- Boost healthcare access and patient compliance, while easing demands on veterinary teams
- Transform the client experience, ease staff stress, and open new revenue streams – all while prioritizing your practice's needs

Telehealth through AllyDVM is more than a vision; it's a reality waiting for you to explore.



Contact your MWI sales representative
or AllyDVM for more information
allydvm.com/telehealth



AAHA MEMBER

Employee of the Month

Andie Corcoran

Lead Veterinary Assistant

Pet Care Clinic Kuna, Kuna, Idaho

Year started in vet medicine: 2017

Years with practice: 3

Nominated by
Kristen Britton, DVM

Why is Andie so awesome?

She looks for solutions rather than dwelling on problems. She consistently pushes to make processes better for the practice, co-workers, and clients to better serve pets. She has been working towards her CVT one class at a time while working full time to reach her goals.

How does she go above and beyond?

She "brings it" daily! She consistently goes above and beyond for our clients, pets, and team providing great care, options, empathy, and enthusiasm. In addition, she embraces diversity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community by serving in the local NOMV chapter. I am so proud to work with Andie and have her lead our team!

In their own words:



Why do you love your job:

I love being able to advocate for those without voices and provide care to those who need it.



Pets at home:

Sophie, a cat beloved by all the roommates.



What brought you to the profession:

Food service and teaching weren't nearly as fun as working with animals and other like-minded people.



Hobbies outside of work:

Crocheting, puzzling.



Favorite Celebrities:

Christopher Meloni and Mariska Hargitay



Favorite TV show:

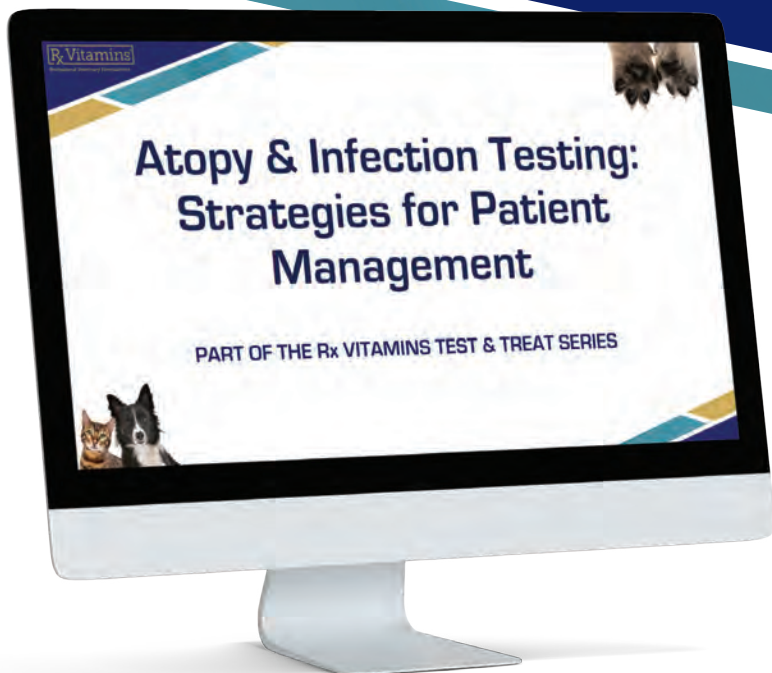
Law and Order: SVU

Each month in Trends, we will spotlight a team member from an accredited practice. Does your team boast an outstanding veterinarian, veterinary technician, veterinary assistant, customer service representative, or kennel worker? Nominate your employee at aaha.org/EOTM, and you and your employee can win \$500 in gift cards courtesy of CareCredit!



*The Employee of the Month contest is administered by AAHA.

Photo courtesy of Pet Care Clinic Kuna



May 30th, 2024
2p/5p/8p (EST)

Presented by

- Dr. Brion Wollam of Rx Vitamins
- Randy Ringold of VDI Laboratories

The Atopy & Infection Panel Kit brings the next generation in allergy and infection testing for skin conditions to your practice. Join our upcoming webinar to explore how this innovative solution can transform your practice, offering advanced insights into atopy and infection testing.

Scan Here to Sign up!



Key Features:

- 2-in-1 Microbiome Skin Swab & 0.3 Serum
- Testing for 125 Allergens (Food and Environmental)
- Complete Bacteria & Fungi Analysis
- Antibiotic Resistance Profiles
- Allergen Cross-Reactivity Information
- Integrated Dashboard for Allergy & Infections
- Immune-Support & Derm Product Recommendations

The Atopy & Infection Panel Kit brings the next generation in allergy and infection testing for skin conditions to your practice.



Post Testing: Rx Vitamins' Recommended Allergy Products

Scan Here to Learn More!



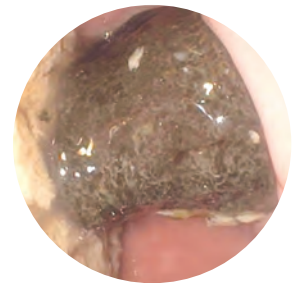
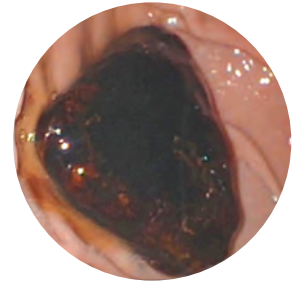
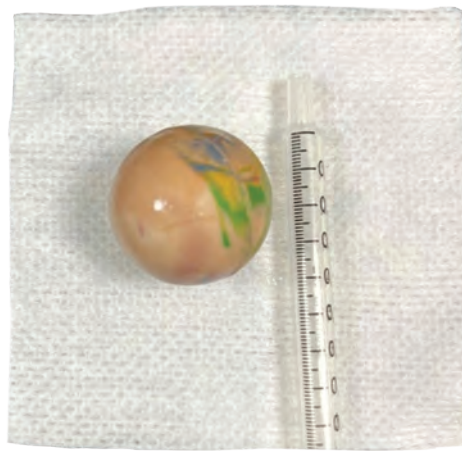


Case Report of the Month

Have You Tried This?

As we all know, dogs like to swallow weird things: balls, hair ties, rocks, undies—you name it, it has been ingested by a dog. Sometimes gastric foreign bodies are too large or sharp to be removed via emesis and too difficult to grasp using forceps in an endoscope. So, short of doing surgery, what can be done?

Enter the humble bottle liner. In a new study in *JAAHA*, the study authors describe how veterinarians were able to remove difficult-to-grasp objects in the stomachs of 12 different dogs using a 4-ounce bottle liner, traction threads, and an endoscope with forceps. This case series report describes the use of a bottle liner as an affordable alternative to gastrotomy when foreign bodies cannot be grasped with forceps or snares.



Find out more about what the 12 dogs ingested, how the procedure was performed, and what the outcomes were in the full report, *“Endoscopic Removal of Gastric Foreign Bodies with a Bottle Liner in 12 Dogs (2020–2023),”* in the current issue of *JAAHA* at jaaha.org.

JAAHA[®]
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Medi-Dose® EPS®

My Vet Takes Good Care of Me.

Medi-Dose®/EPS® Takes Good Care of My Vet.

Veterinary
Pharmacy
& Nursing
Supply
Experts

With over 50 years of health care experience, Medi-Dose/EPS stocks and supplies a wide and varied line of veterinary pharmacy and nursing accessories to help you care for your patients...large, small and in-between. Please call or e-mail us to order or for more information.

Products and accessories for administering, compounding and dispensing

- Bottles
- Bags
- Trays
- Bins
- Labels
- Tapes
- Solid oral packaging
- Liquid oral packaging
- Oral syringes
- Tamper-evident seals
- Sterile droppers
- So much more

Medi-Dose®/EPS®
Exceptional Products and Service



800.523.8966

MediDose.com



VET MED, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

How to Find the Money to Pay Your People More

KRISTEN GREEN SEYMOUR



Is your practice struggling to keep good people? You're not alone. A recent AAHA study found that around 30% of veterinary professionals working in clinical practice planned to leave their jobs; half planned to leave clinical practice altogether, and of that half, 9 out of 10 said that nothing could convince them to come back.

The thing is, the problem has long been framed as a staffing challenge, or a workforce crisis. But if you think about it, the fact that we can't keep passionate, dedicated professionals in clinical practice isn't really a numbers problem. The real problem is that we're putting people who've often dreamed of doing this work since childhood into an ecosystem that's driving them away in record numbers.

So, the solution isn't about adding more people to the mix (although, of course we do want to continue bringing amazing people into the profession). The solution is to understand why so many of these veterinary professionals don't see clinical practice as a place they can remain—and make the necessary adjustments to our practices (and our veterinary ecosystem at large) to change that.

The study mentioned above, *Stay, Please* (available to view at aaha.org/retention-study), identified the retention factors that inspire veterinary professionals to stay where they are, as well as the attrition drivers that, when lacking in a practice, push people away.

Practices experiencing high or unsustainable turnover should begin by addressing the strongest drivers of attrition. Whether they're seeing that turnover practice-wide or in a single role, the same top factor rises to the surface again and

again: Fair compensation. It's the top driver of attrition, and it's also a key retention factor, coming in at number four among those who are happy and plan to stay where they are.

Although it's important to all roles, it's worth noting that the study found fair compensation was nearly twice as important to nonveterinarians planning to leave than it was to the DVMs surveyed. So, while it matters to everyone, it matters to some roles more than others.

Of course, understanding how important fair compensation is to people in a practice is one thing; figuring out exactly what that means—and finding the money in the budget to pay them more—is another.

But it's necessary. Employee wages are a cost of doing business. But also, it's nearly always more affordable (not to mention kinder) to give well-trained, hardworking team members a raise than it is to keep losing and replacing them. From a business perspective, as well as a human perspective, figuring out how to run your

practice in a way that allows you to pay people fairly is a smart move.

Fortunately, Karen Felsted, CPA, MS, DVM, CVPM, CVA, of PantheraT Veterinary Management Consulting, knows a thing or two about how to make those smart moves, and she shared a few of her top tips for figuring out what fair compensation really means—and finding ways to provide it to your team.

Start with the Market

“Bottom line, [employee compensation] has to be a market wage,” Felsted said. “You can have the most perfect set of criteria for hiring and paying for a veterinary technician, but if you're not paying what the community is paying, it doesn't matter how theoretically perfect they are.”

An annual wage audit or parity calculation that compares what people in your practice are earning compared to people in the community is a wise place to start. Keep in mind that, for some roles (like assistants or CSRs), other industries (like human health care)

could also draw talented employees away, so you may want to broaden the scope of your research beyond local veterinary practices. This is especially true if the market wage for a role doesn't meet living wage standards in your area (which you can determine using the MIT Living Wage Calculator). If people cannot afford to pay their bills as a working professional, they may not be able to afford to work for you, no matter how much they love what they do.

If, in doing this research, you discover that the market wage (or living wage) is not an amount you can afford to pay, there's a good chance your practice could benefit from some changes in the way it's being run.

“That leads us to profitability,” Felsted said. “One way to do this is to bring in more clients, but if you bring in more clients and don't change how you operate, that's just going to put a greater workload on the people you already have.” And, it probably goes without saying, but overloading your existing team is not the way to convince them to stick around.

©AAHA/Robin Taylor

Fair compensation.
It's the top driver
of attrition, and
it's also a key
retention factor.



“I think more practices could operate more efficiently and be more productive if they just made changes in workflow and technology,” she said, “as well as training of their team members.”

This is where, for example, technician utilization becomes important; by utilizing team members to the full extent of their license and abilities, it’s possible to improve efficiency, profitability, and employee satisfaction. (Learn more about this in the *2023 AAHA Technician Utilization Guidelines at aaha.org/guidelines*.)

Tie It to Performance

“Seniority, by itself, doesn’t necessarily matter,” Felsted said, “but hopefully, seniority is leading to better skillsets, understanding the practice better, and contributing more to the practice.”

That’s why she thinks that tiered pay makes a lot of sense for many practices. They may be challenging to set up, but she believes that setting clear skill expectations and pay for each tier within a role is well worth the effort.

For example, there needs to be a clear-cut understanding of what skills are required for, say, a Tech Level 1 (which would be the lowest level for a technician) compared to a Tech Level 2 or a Tech Level 3, she said. And, of course, those skills would also differ from what’s required for different levels of CSR or veterinary assistant.

“I think it’s important that those not just be technical skills, but that they also be nontechnical skills. Things like, do they communicate well with clients? Do they work well with teammates? Do they contribute to training?” Felsted said.

Once those skill sets are clearly defined and communicated to all team members, you must provide a way for people to gain those skills so they can move up the ladder—and therefore earn the compensation that comes along with that tier. Because these increases in pay are tied to performance that benefits your practice, you should see improved efficiency (and therefore profitability) as people move up that ladder, making it easier for you to budget for the accompanying raises.

The wage audit mentioned above, regarding the market wage, is also a useful tool within your practice. Felsted notes that this can be particularly important among nondoctor staff.

“Over time, it’s very easy for the salaries or hourly wage paid to all technicians, assistants, or receptionists to get out of whack because the salaries paid to the newer people might be higher than what’s paid to the more experienced people,” she said. “And nothing ticks off those who have been in practice longer than knowing they’ve been there longer,

they do more, they do a better job, and they’re getting paid less.”

Conducting a wage audit to look for that parity in your practice, correlating what people are paid with how good a job they’re doing, is a great way to ensure everyone is being paid appropriately based on their role, duties, and skills.

Avoid Common, Costly Mistakes

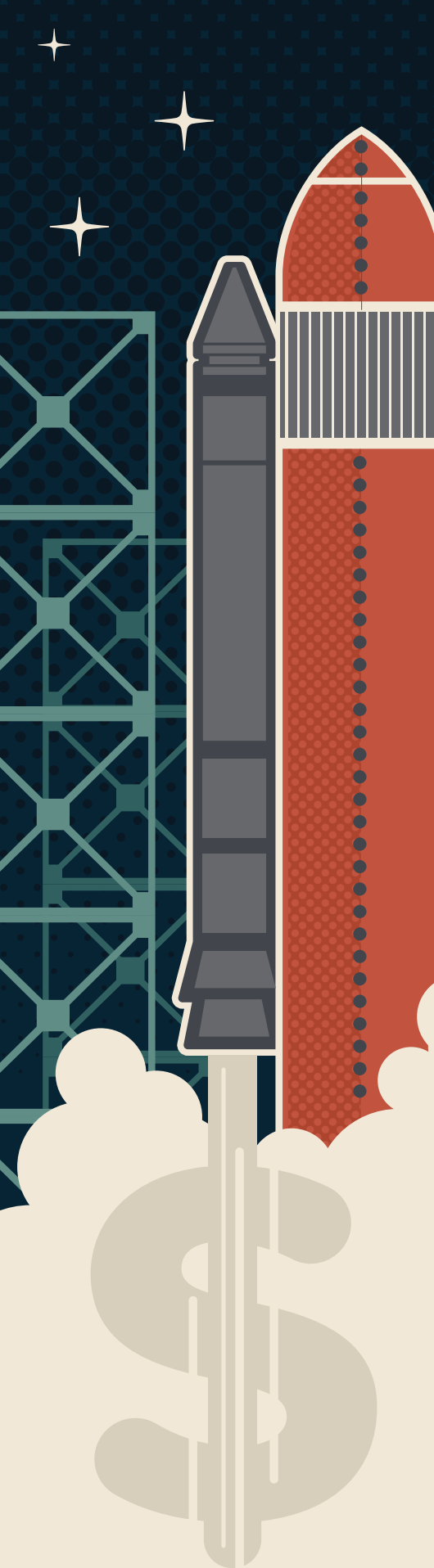
Reducing unnecessary costs is another way practices can find the money to increase wages, and unless a practice is diligent about going back through their financial statement and performance metrics and calculating true profitability, it’s likely that there are a few somewhat invisible expenses they could reduce or cut entirely.

Controlling inventory costs, for example, isn’t only about negotiating the best prices (which small, independent practices may be able to do more effectively by joining a buying group, said Felsted), but also about controlling how much you have on your shelves. “Do you really need to have three months’ worth of that product?” she asked, “or could you have one month?”

Understanding and tracking anything related to variable cost, like lab costs, drugs and medical supplies, pet food, etc., is important. “Understanding your inventory costs are some of the easiest things to correct and control,” Felsted said. “You have to have the right systems and internal controls in place, but that’s pretty straightforward—and it can be very satisfying to get inventory under control.”

Missed charges, whether accidental or purposeful, happen too. And, Felsted added, “You





“You can have the most perfect set of criteria for hiring and paying for a veterinary technician, but if you’re not paying what the community is paying, it doesn’t matter how theoretically perfect they are.”

Karen Felsted, CPA, MS, DVM, CVPM, CVA,
PantheraT Veterinary Management Consulting

cannot get around the fact that embezzlement and theft happens in every single practice out there—and most of that is not client theft.”

She also suggests taking a close look at who’s working when, and what’s getting done during that time. “We often see too many people in place, and they’re working too much overtime, and they’re just not doing their jobs efficiently,” she said. “That’s not necessarily their fault—the practice isn’t giving them the tools and resources to work efficiently.” It’s important to communicate with your team about your observations, though—not only is it an opportunity to learn what processes and tools these team members need, but it’s always possible that something is occurring during those hours that’s not visible in the day’s records.

If you want to hire—and keep—quality employees, you simply cannot afford to ignore the importance of fair compensation. If you don’t address this key driver of attrition and retention, people will leave, and the cost of losing and

replacing team members is likely to make a well-earned raise look like a more budget-friendly alternative.

And when you reduce unnecessary practice cost, tie wage increases to proven skills, improve practice efficiency, and provide your team ways to achieve additional competencies—profitability will increase organically, making salary adjustments more achievable in a thriving market. ■

Note: This article is part of our Stay, Please series, which focuses on providing resources (as identified in our Stay, Please retention study) to retain the 30% of all veterinary professionals considering leaving their clinical practice. Here at AAHA, we believe you were made for this work, and we’re committed to making clinical practice a sustainable career choice for every member of the team.

To learn more about the American Animal Hospital Association’s (AAHA) Stay, Please retention study, head over to aaha.com/retention-study.



Congratulations Cory on making the Insurance Business America Hot 100 List!



About Alera Group | Veterinary Division

Alera Group's Veterinary Team exists to provide veterinary practice owners and operators two things: dedicated professionals experienced in finding solutions for the unique needs of animal hospitals, and access to expertise provided by national insurance brokerage and consulting firms. Our clients offer industry-leading benefits programs and are recognized as places people want to work.

Scan the code to learn how we can help your practice.





Many people worry about their financial health, and those in the veterinary community are not immune to that concern. Unfortunately, a person’s financial worries can be a significant cause of stress and that

stress can affect wellbeing.

In her role as a veterinary social worker, Erin Wasson, MSW, RSW, University of Saskatchewan, Canada, said she has observed that personal finances exert a considerable influence on those in the veterinary community.

“Educational debt can create

ongoing stress and impact individuals’ mental health. The pressure to meet financial obligations can become a persistent source of concern, affecting both personal and professional aspects of their lives. When that happens, she encourages clients to “practice mindfulness and learn



Financial Health, Mental Health

Is Financial Distress Affecting Your Team's Wellbeing?

BY MAUREEN BLANEY FLIETNER

to cultivate the regulation of their nervous system—a key feature of managing stress.

“The ramifications of personal financial stress extend beyond mere monetary concerns. Those experiencing financial strain commonly report heightened levels of anxiety and depression,

influencing their overall wellbeing,” explained Wasson. “Because we know that emotional and psychological health is intrinsically connected to overall physical health and wellbeing, the toll on physical health is notable, with stress-related illnesses becoming more prevalent.

“Financial stress inevitably spills over into the workplace. Decreased job satisfaction, heightened levels of burnout, and strained relationships with colleagues are common manifestations. It can create a challenging work environment, which in turn potentially impacts

the quality of care provided to animals and the overall effectiveness of the veterinary team. The unique challenge arises from the conflict between the altruistic values around animal care and the necessity to operate within a business model, leading to heightened moral strain and stress.”

Wages and Debt Fuel Stress

Of course, proper compensation goes a long way to relieve that distress. Financial stress has been a predominant topic of conversation among members of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), according to Phillip Russo, executive director.

“NAVTA’s 2022 Demographic Survey showed that the median salary for a credentialed veterinary technician was \$45,700. Most veterinary technicians earn between \$21 and \$25 per hour, which does not equate to the level of education and responsibilities they have,” he noted.

“That’s why the NAVTA survey also showed that one out of every three respondents has a second full-time job. Think about it: One-third of the CVTs are, on average, working 16 hours a day just to make ends meet.”

On top of that, he explained, more than one-third of respondents said they have student loan debt of \$29,700 on average, slightly higher than the overall average US student loan of \$28,950.

Ryan Frazier, BS, LVT, a Certified Career Coach in the Seattle area makes the data personal.

“Early in my career, I had my car repossessed because I had to choose if I should pay my rent,

buy food, or pay my student loans. This was even when I had two jobs working in veterinary medicine. It was so embarrassing,” he said.

“Even at this point in my career, many years later, I do not know how I can afford to have children because I do not make enough money to buy much extra besides my bills.”

Rebecca Rose, RVT, Certified Career Coach, owner of Rebecca Rose Coaching, LLC, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, knows from experience that “living paycheck to paycheck is hugely stressful.” As a single woman, parenting, paying bills, juggling unexpected expenses, and attempting to follow a budget, she wasn’t making enough to stash away in an emergency fund.

“I understand budgeting, living within your means, and saving for a rainy day,” Rose said. “Even 10 years ago, when I was making \$45,000 a year, the expenses were \$53,000. I had to have side hustles or gigs to make up the difference.”

For new veterinarians, at least, the financial news is a bit better. Starting salaries have been going up. The mean starting salary in 2022 was \$111,242 for those who secured full-time employment, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

AVMA also found that the mean veterinary degree debt was

\$147,258 for 2022 graduates from US veterinary colleges, down more than 6% from 2020. Another key measure: 18% of 2022 graduates were able to finish their veterinary education with no debt.

But those lower debt obligations for new graduates do not mitigate the student debt burdens accumulated by their predecessors who are further along in their careers.

Financial wellness coach Grace Kim, DVM, Accredited Financial Counselor and founder of Richer Life, said she knows about that.

After graduating from veterinary school in 2003 with “very little financial literacy” and a six-figure student loan, she put that debt on a fixed-rate 30-year auto-pay. A few years later, she married, they bought a home, a new car, and went from a family of two to a family of five in a short time. That led to an increase in expenses she didn’t anticipate or know how best to handle. When they moved to a new city for her husband’s job, she also had to take a much longer break from clinical practice than anticipated.

When she couldn’t find anyone to answer her budgeting questions “without trying to get me to buy more insurance products or manage our assets,” she reinvented her career. Kim became a financial wellness coach and educator for veterinary professionals.

“Financial stress inevitably spills over into the workplace.”

Erin Wasson, MSW, RSW, University of Saskatchewan, Canada



“Financial wellbeing is often overlooked yet is a critical part of overall wellbeing,” said Kim.

In her work primarily with early career veterinarians, she said that many express a high level of financial stress due to student loans, the tight housing market, and generally not feeling confident about making the right choices with their money. There is also a sense of feeling “behind” with finances after so many years of pursuing a veterinary degree.

“For veterinary professionals in general, there are challenges

with knowing how to best budget, save, invest, and pay off debt while paying the bills and dealing with inflation and unexpected expenses. These challenges can be compounded if there are changes in jobs, a relationship status, or illness,” she explained.

Financial Literacy Lacking

Veterinary professionals are not alone in their financial challenges. An annual US survey of 28 questions across eight functional areas—earning, consuming, saving,

investing, borrowing/managing debt, insuring, comprehending risk, and go-to information sources—has found that, again in 2022, many Americans lacked financial literacy.

Developed by the TIAA Institute and the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center at the George Washington University School of Business, the Personal Finance Index measures knowledge and understanding that enable sound financial decision making and effective management of personal finances among US adults.

For 2022, adults correctly answered only 48% of the questions, which has been about the norm since the project began in 2017. The questions always found to be the most difficult are those about comprehending risk with only 35% of them answered correctly.

The survey discussion noted that, while resources do matter, as does access and opportunity in the financial system, at the same time, the ability to make sound financial decisions matters as well. It concluded that financial education programs and resources could help close the knowledge gap and improve financial wellbeing as Americans navigate challenging times.



“Basic financial literacy is not universally taught,” said Kim, “so veterinary professionals have a wide range of financial knowledge and skills that depend on their own upbringing, their personalities, and influences (good and bad) when it comes to making financial decisions. Student loan repayment, particularly, has gotten more confusing and complex due to many recent changes made by the Department of Education.

“Because there is no one right way to budget, save, invest, or pay off student loans, individuals can get overwhelmed and confused with their options, which many times lead to inaction due to fear of making the wrong decision.”

When Rose has presented on the topics of personal finances and concepts in budgeting to veterinary teams, she, too, has found that that information is foreign to many.

“Families rarely speak around the dinner table on managing personal finances or the tools and resources available. Vocational schools and veterinary universities do not have room in their curriculum to tackle personal finances. So does the topic and education of finances, personal and for that of the hospital, fall on the shoulders of the practice

manager/owners? Probably not, but these are concepts that will help generate a better ROI for the practice,” she suggested.

Finding, Making Opportunities to Learn

“Financial stress undoubtedly affects all levels of veterinary staff from the kennel help to the doctors,” according to Bethany Bankovich, CVPM, MHRM, CVT, CCFP, hospital administrator of Neffsville Veterinary Clinic in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

“Newer associates are often strapped with extremely high student loan debt, which can take a serious toll on their mental and physical health. They’re often not comfortable with taking full advantage of employer-sponsored 401(k) plans, buying homes, or starting families for quite a while due to this stress. For other team members, one unforeseen expense such as a major vehicle repair can be devastating.”

Bankovich said she thinks that “most people don’t really analyze their monthly expenses to see where their money is going. If they did, there would probably be a lot less discretionary spending. It always amazes me how much money people spend on Doordash, Starbucks, or streaming subscriptions.

“Financial wellbeing is often overlooked yet is a critical part of overall wellbeing.”

Grace Kim, DVM, Accredited Financial Counselor

Check Scholarships, Grants to Help Ease Financial Pressures, Stress

Scholarships, grants, and other assistance for debt and wellbeing are available to those in the veterinary profession. Here are a few resources to check out:

- **The Paisley Paws Charitable Veterinary Foundation**, founded by Brian Hamm, DVM, will begin taking applications later this year for its first two \$2,500 scholarships to help senior-level veterinary students offset education expenses. It also will offer up to \$5,000 over four consecutive weeks for mental health support for veterinary professionals nationwide. Information regarding both opportunities will be announced on its website PaisleyPaws.org later this year.

Paisley Paws, which officially launched in October 2022, has set a three-pillar approach to change the landscape of the veterinary profession. One pillar is directed at the wellbeing of veterinary professionals, one at the debt of veterinary students, and the third at pet owners struggling due to hardship.

According to Executive Director Andrea McKown, the foundation works collaboratively with its “PAWrtner” hospitals to reduce hardship euthanasia and to help pet families in need of veterinary care. Its mental health financial support will be available for

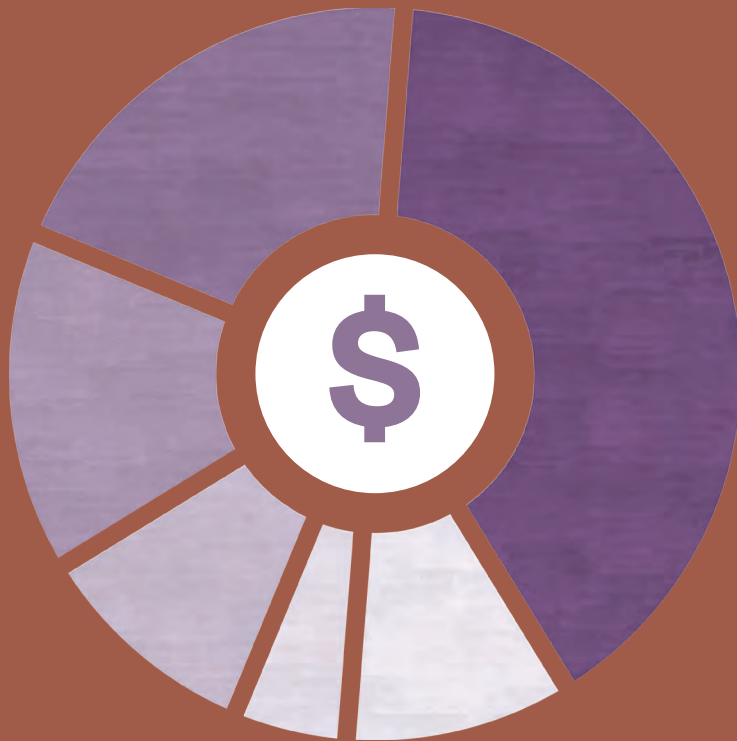
any veterinary professional nationwide who may need medical leave and mental health services to enhance their wellbeing and prevent suicide. The need for this crisis support is often from dealing with financial struggles, poor work-life balance, compassion fatigue, and other factors. Its scholarships are for senior-level veterinary students in their fall or spring semester.

- **NAVTA** has partnered with Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health USA, Inc., (BI) to offer \$2,500 scholarships to veterinary technician students and recent graduates through a Tuition for Vet Techs Scholarship program, according to Russo. BI has committed to funding the program through 2026.
- **The American Veterinary Medical Association’s** website (avma.org) includes information about student loan forgiveness and repayment programs, your financial life, and your wellbeing.

- **The American Veterinary Medical Foundation** offers two veterinary technician scholarships and has information about national and regional scholarships on its website (avmf.org).

In 2022, the AVMF and the Zoetis Foundation began to offer \$2,000 veterinary technician student scholarships to address the issue of student debt and the need to foster diversity in the profession. In 2023, the AVMF partnered with Merck Animal Health to establish a \$2,000 veterinary technician student scholarship for veterinary technician students in their final year and attending an AVMA-accredited veterinary technician school in the United States and Puerto Rico.

- **The American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges’** (aavmc.org) scholarships page provides links to opportunities.



Tips to Ease Financial Stress and Enhance Wellbeing

- Improve your financial literacy so you can navigate your unique financial challenges effectively.
- Consider mentorship programs and support groups as platforms to discuss financial challenges and alleviate the sense of isolation that often accompanies financial stress.
- Review your spending to see exactly where your money is going. It's much like ordering labs for patients. You need to know the baseline numbers before you can develop the appropriate treatment plan.
- Automate your savings so you can adjust your spending to a level that allows you to save for the long term and live within your means.
- Check out the free personal finance information and programs available online, through YouTube, and at nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Two online options: playmoneysmart.fdic.gov/games and consumer.gov

Millennials and Gen Zers make up about 40% of the workforce but their financial literacy is virtually nonexistent. They've been told but not taught. Those are two very different things."

The Neffsville partners/owners believe that financial wellness is a part of total wellness, said Bankovich, and have provided in-person financial literacy lunch-and-learns twice a year for the entire team for more than 10 years. She said the sessions usually cover budgeting, saving, taking advantage of employer-sponsored 401(k) plans, reducing expenses, paying off debt, and the power of compound interest.

She admits it's difficult to know for sure if the opportunities have an effect. But, she said, after each session, "more people will pack their lunches for a time, there will be more K-cups in the lounge, and there are more requests to increase individual 401(k) contributions."

Since studies show that Millennials and Gen Zers report feeling sick and anxious about financial uncertainty, she suggested that hospitals may want to offer financial literacy training.

"We are already seeing the mental and physical effects of financial illiteracy in our practices, and we should want to provide resources and education to treat it," Bankovich said.

Cassy Timken, CVPM, practice administrator at Tampa Bay Veterinary Medical Group, said that financial stress across different demographics is not uniform.

"We have high-salaried team members who do and don't fret about money and lower-salaried team members who do and don't fret about finances. People that live within their means seem better adjusted than those that don't."

“One-third of CVTs are, on average, working 16 hours a day just to make ends meet.”

Phillip Russo, executive director, NAVTA

She suggested that some team members have little to no financial acumen, “complaining about how high bills are but walking around with an expensive coffee drink or eating out lunch every day.”

She said the company has offered financial webinars and in-person individualized financial training for the last 10 years. At onboarding, she said, employees also meet with the financial planner to learn about the 401(k) offering and to ask any financial questions.

Timken said the hospital group has received positive feedback about the financial sessions they offer and suggested that other hospitals include financial literacy in their training to help the whole person.

NAVTA has not offered any educational sessions on financial literacy yet but it’s on its radar, according to Russo, NAVTA’s executive director.

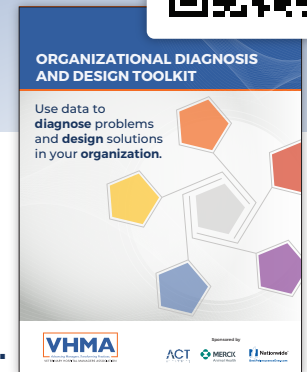
“We agree that most people lack financial literacy, even with things as basic as creating and living on a budget and knowing how to get and stay out of debt,” Russo said.

Seattle career coach Frazier said he has not taken any personal finance classes but agrees that they could make him wiser. However, he doesn’t think it will help when “many LVTs make too little income to pay the standard bills.”

“If I were to take classes, I would feel like budgeting, retirement, and investing would be helpful. I was well into my 30s before I started a retirement fund. I am concerned that I will not have enough to retire when my body can no longer be a veterinary technician. I am also not sure if I would trust information coming from my practice as I believe they may be looking for the best interest of the business and they may not be looking out for my future.” ■

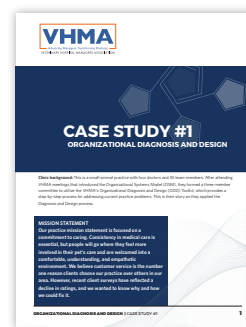
ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSIS AND DESIGN TOOLKIT

Learn more

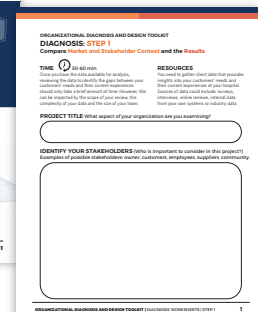


It’s time to think strategically about the challenges facing your veterinary practice.

The Organizational Diagnosis and Design Toolkit introduces the Organization Systems Model.



Case studies illustrate how the Organizational Systems Model has worked for other veterinary practices.



Worksheets walk you through the process step-by-step.

USE THE TOOLKIT TO WORK ON **ANY ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUE YOU IDENTIFY AT YOUR PRACTICE:**

- ◆ Staffing shortages
- ◆ Client service issues
- ◆ Employee satisfaction issues
- ◆ Operation efficiencies
- ◆ Caseload management
- ◆ Communication issues
- ◆ Pharmacy fulfillment

...just to name a few.





GET SMART / **SURGICAL LASERS**

Are You Laser Focused?

Pros and Cons of a Surgical Laser

BY SCOTT A. KRICK, DVM

Perhaps you've recently been contemplating the purchase of a surgical laser. You've read some literature or spoken with reps from one or more of the companies that sell this type of equipment and are wondering whether this is a valuable tool or an expensive toy. Many veterinarians have the same question. On one hand, the promise of less pain and inflammation, better hemostasis, and potentially faster healing is appealing. On the other hand, it is reasonable to be skeptical of whether clients will opt for the increased surgical costs.

In my case, nearly 20 years ago, I made the decision to buy, enrolled in some continuing

education focused on laser surgery, and subsequently purchased a 15-watt articulated arm CO₂ surgical laser. I am pleased to report that I never regretted the purchase for a moment. The anticipated reluctance from the clients never materialized.

In fact, I took the approach of doing no overt marketing to the clients. I decided that we would charge an additional fee of \$75 for the use of the laser during any routine surgery and charge a time-based fee for extended use in complicated cases. When clients brought their pets in for scheduled surgery, my reception and technician staff simply asked pet owners whether they would

like to have the laser used as part of the surgery. Naturally, the pet owners would inquire what the benefits were.

They were informed that the primary benefits were reduced pain and bleeding. We found that 85% of all clients elected to use the laser and accepted the additional charge with no hesitation, questions, or need for further "sales pitch."

I'm not suggesting that this approach was ideal, or savvy, but with little guidance at the time, it was very effective. Because of the overwhelming acceptance by the clients and the fact that there are minimal consumables associated with its use, we were able to generate enough additional profit



in six months to cover the cost of the unit and turn a healthy profit in the first year.

Types of Surgical Lasers

There are four major classes of lasers (I–IV) that vary in power. The classifications are a reflection of the potential for injury to tissue and eyes and not directly related to their applications. Lasers in higher classes have more power output and therefore more potential for injury. Of the four laser classes, most surgical lasers used in veterinary practice are typically Class IV lasers while therapeutic lasers are generally Class IIIb or IV. Laser units are also

differentiated by their laser light source. CO2 lasers are generally the most widely used and are practical for most routine veterinary surgical procedures. Diode lasers have the advantage of performing better in fluid environments and in endoscopic applications. Yttrium aluminum garnet (YAG) lasers are ideal for specialized use in microsurgery such as neurologic and urinary tract procedures. Many surgical lasers also have a Class I or II alignment beam that provides a visual guide to where the higher power surgical laser beam is aimed prior to activation by the surgeon.

Surgical lasers have either an articulated arm with a series of mirrors and lenses that focus

Surgical lasers provide a very precise tool for incising and excising tissue while sealing small blood vessels and nerve endings.

and direct the beam, or employ a flexible fiberoptic waveguide, with or without a consumable tip, to deliver the laser energy to the target tissue. The waveguide lasers are a bit less cumbersome to manipulate in confined spaces, but surgeons quickly adapt to whichever type of laser they use. Laser units have control panels that allow the operator to adjust power and the pulse frequency of the laser light dependent on the application, giving the surgeon a wide range of options dependent on the surgical conditions. Additionally, the surgeon can “defocus” the beam by increasing the distance between the tissue and the focal point of the laser beam. This permits the laser light energy to be distributed over a greater area, decreasing the effective power delivered in applications such as ablation and hemostasis.

Pros and Cons

So what are the pros and cons? Surgical lasers provide a very precise tool for incising and excising tissue while sealing small blood vessels and nerve endings. The claims that they can reduce surgical pain, hemorrhage, and possibly swelling are well founded. Additionally, laser energy is locally antimicrobial, potentially reducing surgical site infection.

For the veterinarian who is new to the technology, surgical time can initially be prolonged; however, with experience and familiarity, it is not significantly different than using a scalpel. In fact, lasers can decrease surgery time. For some procedures such as soft palate resection in brachycephalic dogs, surgical time drops from 30–45 minutes or more



For the veterinarian who is new to the technology, surgical time can initially be prolonged, however with experience and familiarity, it is not significantly different than using a scalpel. In fact, lasers can decrease surgery time.

using traditional instruments and suturing, to literally 10 minutes with little or no hemorrhage or swelling to manage.

Compared to some other capital investments, adding laser surgery to your practice can provide a significant profit center as well.

There are very few cons, but there are some. Lasers are not inexpensive; however, most veterinarians find that the cost can be quickly recouped.

Additionally, laser use is limited to predominantly superficial soft tissues and those that can be easily exteriorized, although most of a general practice’s surgical cases likely fall within this category.

The plume created from vaporized tissue is potentially harmful to the operator and those nearby. Manufacturers offer “smoke” evacuators, which, if used properly, significantly mitigate this risk.

Novice users often initially use excessive power or move the



laser through tissue too slowly, resulting in significant collateral tissue damage and reduced healing. This is usually overcome with experience and education on proper technique, and the learning curve for appropriate use of a surgical laser is fairly short. Any veterinarian who is comfortable with surgical techniques can easily master laser surgery.

Laser light can cause permanent retinal damage and injury to exposed collateral tissue (including your own). Protective glasses are essential and are provided by all manufacturers and after-market suppliers. Proper technique and appropriate handling of the device should minimize the risk of collateral tissue injury. It is imperative to remember that laser light reflected off of shiny surfaces such as surgical instruments can also result in injury to the pet or health care team nearby.

While laser use around the oxygen-rich environment associated with anesthesia carries

inherent risk, that risk can be easily mitigated with proper technique, even in and around the intubated oral cavity.

It should go without saying that, like any other piece of medical equipment, if it doesn't get used, it cannot generate revenue. Sure, lasers are arguably just another means to incise or excise tissue. But they do have capabilities that can make surgery quicker and more convenient for you and less bloody and painful for your patients.

Before You Buy

If you are considering buying one for your practice, it behooves you to speak to one of the surgical laser manufacturers about options and costs. Also, speak to colleagues who have incorporated laser surgery into their practice as they can provide useful tips on situations in which they utilize the laser and how they sell and charge for the service.

Then, develop a plan to market the service to your clients. Laser manufacturers provide effective client brochures and clinic signage which will highlight the benefits to your patients. This educational material, delivered at the time of the recommendation for surgery, will help in your team's efforts. As with most services, clients generally accept associated costs if they perceive value associated with it. Be sure that you educate the staff so that they understand—and can convey—the benefits of offering this service to your clients.

Veterinary technicians have a unique opportunity to provide education to the clients and to answer any questions that a client might have about laser

surgery immediately following an appointment where surgery is recommended. They are also integral to keeping the equipment prepared for surgery and in assisting with evacuation of the vaporized plume and ensuring the safety of the patient and staff during the procedure.

There is a wealth of literature references and several very good textbooks that focus on the use of surgical lasers in veterinary medicine. Below are several references that may be useful in your decision-making process. ■

Further Reading

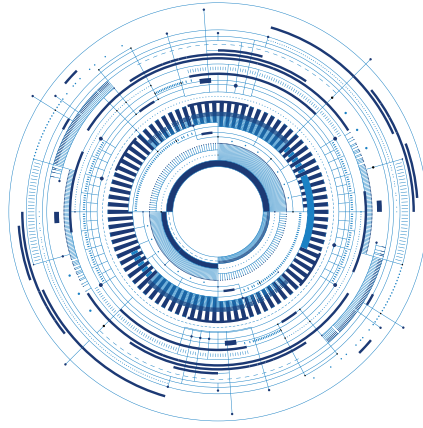
Clark, Geoffrey DVM. "Carbon Dioxide laser surgery in dogs." *Canine Sports Medicine Update*, October, 1997

Godbold J. "CO2 Laser surgery: Selecting the best delivery system." *Veterinary Practice News*. 2011;6.

Godbold J. "CO2 Laser surgery: Standard of care." *Veterinary Practice News*. 2012;3:22-23.

Lucroy M.D. and Bartels K.E. "Surgical Lasers," *Textbook of Small Animal Surgery*. Slatter, 3rd Edition, 2001

Winkler C.J. "The ideal laser scalpel." *Laser Surgery in Veterinary Medicine*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell; 2019:32-41.



TECH SUPPORT / AI APPLICATIONS

Applications of AI in Veterinary Practice

From Focused Uses to Broad Industry Support

BY AARON SMILEY, DVM AND JASON SZUMSKI, DVM

The field of veterinary medicine is currently witnessing a pivotal transformation, largely fueled by the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and various technological advancements. This shift goes beyond the mere adoption of new tools; it represents a fundamental change in the operational and care delivery paradigms of veterinary practices.

At the heart of this revolution

is the strategic implementation of AI technologies to improve medical documentation processes, particularly through the crafting of detailed SOAP (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan) notes. This innovation has led to a significant enhancement in the efficiency of communication between veterinarians and pet owners, streamlining the exchange of crucial health information and facilitating better care outcomes for pets.

The Pressing Need for Enhanced Veterinary Practice Productivity

Today's veterinary practices are navigating through an array of challenges, most notably the rising demand for veterinary services against a backdrop of an expanding pet population and a notable scarcity of veterinary professionals. This scenario places a tremendous burden on existing practices,

compelling them to reconsider and revamp their conventional operational frameworks to maintain high standards of care while also ensuring a sustainable work life for their teams.

The projection from IDEXX’s “Finding the Time” report anticipates that productivity needs to increase by 40% by 2030. This underscores the critical nature of this issue, highlighting the immediate need for innovative solutions to enhance productivity and efficiency in veterinary care delivery.

Redefining Documentation Practices in Veterinary Medicine

The integration of AI into the documentation processes within veterinary medicine, particularly through the enhancement of SOAP note creation, marks a significant opportunity towards improving efficiencies in veterinary practices.

Practices like Devonshire Veterinary Clinic in Anderson, Indiana, are at the forefront of this innovation, demonstrating the vast capabilities of AI to not only streamline documentation but

also to significantly improve the quality and efficiency of medical record-keeping.

The initial change was met with some resistance, mainly the concern that a change to the traditional workflow would decrease efficiency. However, the experience of staff at Devonshire has highlighted a critical insight: the transition to an AI generated SOAP note can take place while the team continues to write a traditional SOAP note. This is critical because it allows the veterinary team to test the



Industry Predictions

Caleb Frankel, VMD, is founder of veterinary software and technology company Instinct Science. Frankel offered these predictions on the direction technology is headed in the veterinary industry.

Entrepreneurial Spirit Rekindled

The past decade of corporate consolidation and evolving career dynamics is fostering a new era of veterinary operations and ownership. I'm anticipating a wave of independent and group practice ownership and new and innovative practice models as veterinarians have and will always be true entrepreneurial pioneers.

AI as a Catalyst

AI stands to augment the veterinary profession, enhancing diagnostic accuracy, streamlining operations, and enriching the client-patient experience. Here at Instinct, we are taking a practical, safe, and thoughtful approach in how we deploy AI into our software tools. We envision workflow and medical assistants in the future, built directly into your software, that will help greatly automate your tasks and provide deeply integrated trusted content served in helpful and targeted ways, directly at the point of care.

Consolidation of Hospital Technology

Hospitals are zeroing in on technology that does it all—from appointments to billing—to make life easier and cut down on costs. By merging all of these tools into one, we're not just saving clicks and headaches, we're paving the way for smoother, more reliable care. It's about making every moment count, for our teams and the animals we serve.

accuracy and time savings of the new process without giving up the traditional method.

The application of AI for writing SOAP notes offers two significant advantages. Firstly, it minimizes the time veterinarians spend on administrative tasks, allowing them to dedicate more attention to patient care and consultation. This efficiency gain is crucial in a profession where time is often scarce and the demand for services is continuously growing.

Secondly, the use of AI in documentation ensures a higher degree of accuracy and consistency in patient records. AI systems can help identify potential errors or omissions in real-time, prompting veterinarians to include all relevant information, which in turn facilitates better care and follow-up. Moreover, AI-driven documentation tools are designed to be intuitive and easily integrated into the daily workflows of veterinary practices. These AI tools only require an audio recording of the conversation between the veterinarian and the animal's owner during the physical exam to create a highly accurate SOAP note. The capability of the technology can be difficult to truly appreciate until it is experienced.

Transforming Veterinary Practice Through Efficient Time Management

Using AI-generated SOAP notes and other AI-assisted technology can also save veterinarians precious time. This additional time can be redirected towards various aspects of patient care that demand a veterinarian's expertise and compassion, such as conducting more thorough examinations, engaging in detailed discussions

with pet owners, or simply being more present and attentive during patient interactions. The direct result of this reallocated time is a notable enhancement in patient outcomes. When veterinarians can invest more time in each case, they are better positioned to diagnose accurately, tailor treatment plans effectively, and foster a deeper connection with both the patient and the pet owner.

The transformation of veterinary practice through efficient time management, facilitated by AI, extends beyond the individual veterinarian or practice. It has the potential to reshape the veterinary profession at large, setting new standards for what is achievable in terms of care quality and efficiency. As veterinary practices become more efficient, they can serve a larger number of patients without sacrificing the quality of care, thereby addressing some of the pressing challenges facing the profession, such as the increasing demand for veterinary services and the shortage of veterinary professionals.

Beyond Documentation: The Broad Scope of AI in Veterinary Medicine

The impact of AI in the realm of veterinary medicine transcends the boundaries of documentation, heralding a new era of technological integration that touches upon every facet of veterinary practice. AI's versatility is showcased in its application across a variety of critical areas, transforming not just how information is recorded but fundamentally altering approaches

to diagnosis, treatment, and education within the field.

AI systems can sift through extensive databases of clinical records and research findings to offer diagnostic suggestions based on symptoms presented and historical data. This capability not only aids in formulating differential diagnoses but also in predicting potential complications, thereby guiding veterinarians towards the most effective treatment plans. Such diagnostic support is invaluable in a profession where the variety of species and conditions encountered presents a continual challenge.

The impact of AI in the realm of veterinary medicine transcends the boundaries of documentation, heralding a new era of technological integration that touches upon every facet of veterinary practice.



Fostering a Positive Workplace Culture

Automating the documentation process with AI-assisted technology gives veterinary professionals more time to engage in meaningful discussions with each other about patient care, thus promoting a culture of teamwork and shared decision-making. This collaboration strengthens camaraderie and unity among staff, positively influencing the clinic's atmosphere. Moreover, AI's role in reducing the administrative

burden helps alleviate the stress and burnout associated with manual documentation, creating a more balanced and enjoyable work environment that positively impacts staff satisfaction and retention.

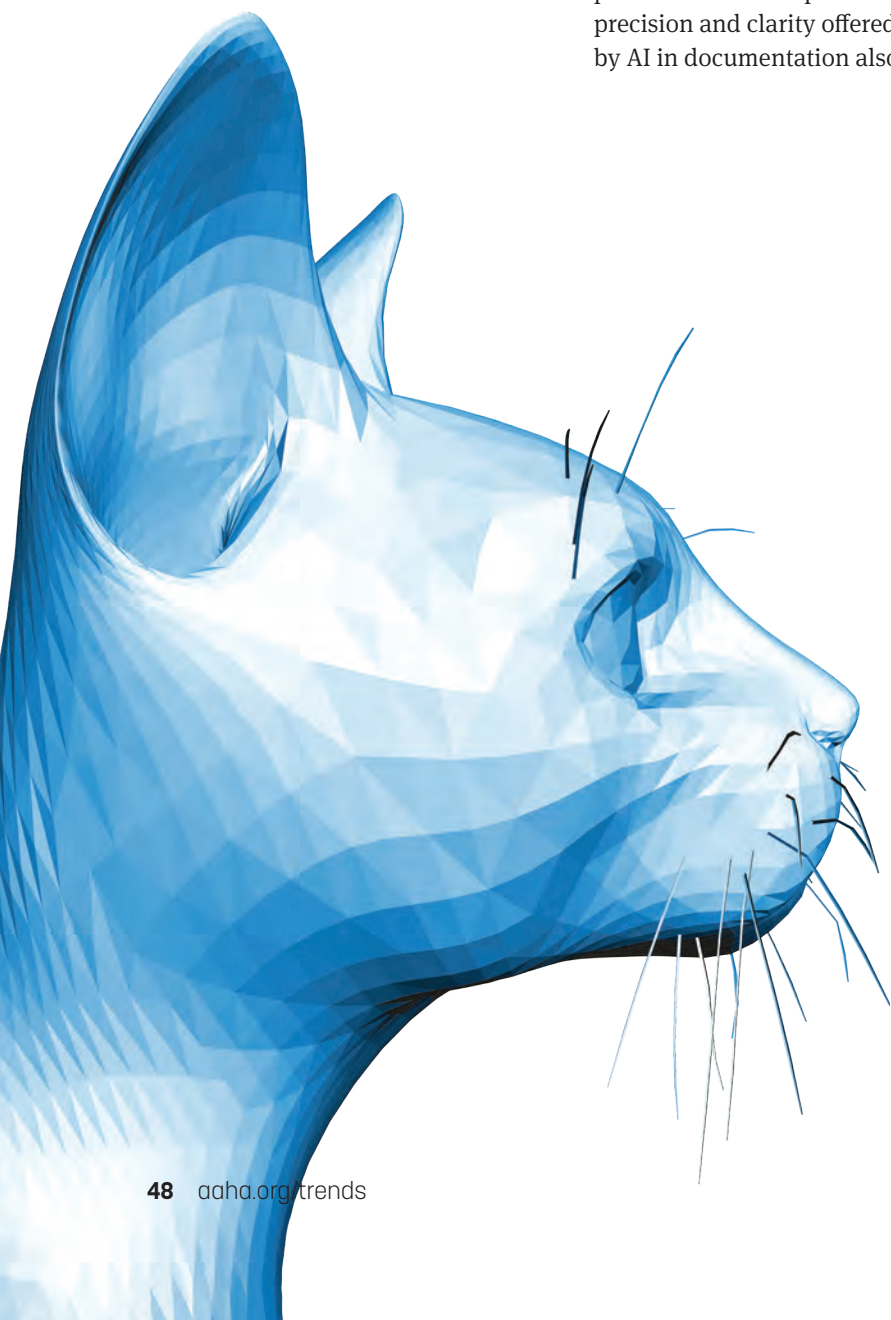
Furthermore, as AI technology evolves, AI-assisted tools can continuously learn, providing insights from the latest research and data analytics. This encourages a culture of education and innovation within the clinic, inspiring staff to embrace new knowledge and techniques, which fosters personal and professional development. The precision and clarity offered by AI in documentation also

enhances both internal and external communication, ensuring transparency and understanding within the veterinary team and building trust and satisfaction among pet owners by facilitating more effective communication about their pet's health and care plans.

Additionally, the time saved and the increase in the accuracy of patient records through AI-assisted documentation such as SOAP notes translate to better patient care and safety. This allows the veterinary team to concentrate more on what they do best—caring for animals. By integrating these various elements, AI can play a significant role in creating a positive workplace culture within veterinary clinics, characterized by an environment where teamwork, well-being, continuous learning, and efficient communication are paramount.

This not only boosts the morale and job satisfaction of veterinary professionals but also ensures the

As AI technology evolves, AI-assisted tools can continuously learn, providing insights from the latest research and data analytics.



Veterinary Software Innovators

Technology moves at a fast clip, and vet med software innovators are keeping up with the times. Check out these companies that are taking the pet industry into the future.

Shepherd Veterinary Software

Founder:

Cindy Barnes, DVM, CSVMT

Learn more:

shepherd.vet

From the Company:

Shepherd Veterinary Software is a cloud-based practice management solution, founded by a practicing veterinarian and mom who understood the dire need for a software that supports rather than complicates veterinary practices.

Extensive online training modules, virtual scenario training, and live simulations ensure a seamless transition for veterinary teams, making efficiency and convenience a priority. Shepherd's intuitive user interfaces ensure that every member of the team, regardless of generation, can effortlessly adapt to the software, facilitating a smooth transition to cloud-based operations.

The software platform includes features such as automated charge capture, detailed reporting, inventory tracking, digital whiteboard, patient scheduling, texting, client and staff communication, intuitive dashboard, SOAP-based medical records, easy estimates, complete activity logs, autosave, built-in templates, patient tracking, and more.

Anticipating the evolving landscape of veterinary medicine, the company is exploring the integration of AI into its software. By leveraging AI, Shepherd aims to redefine software functionality, user interactions, client engagement, and medical practice methodologies.

VetSOAP

Founders:

Aaron Smiley, DVM, and Jason Szumski, DVM

Learn more:

vetsoap.ai

From the Company:

VetSOAP revolutionizes veterinary documentation by automating the creation of SOAP notes from audio recordings, eliminating manual writing or dictation. It prioritizes accuracy to save veterinarians up to an hour daily, enhancing productivity. Developed by veterinarians, it offers a seamless note-generation process, streamlines workflows, and improves record quality, focusing on patient care. VetSOAP's affordable pricing includes unlimited usage, advanced features, and premium support, making it an invaluable tool for veterinary practices aiming for efficiency and high-quality care.

Instinct Science

Founder:

Caleb Frankel,
VMD

Learn more:

instinct.vet

From the Company:

Instinct offers a full electronic medical records and practice management system (Instinct EMR), a standalone digital workflow treatment plan (Instinct Treatment Plan) and an e-prescribing platform (Instinct Scripts). Instinct recently acquired VetMedux, welcoming Clinician's Brief, Plumb's Veterinary Drugs, and Plumb's Pro into our growing suite of mission-critical, essential tools for the veterinary caretakers of today and tomorrow.

Instinct EMR is a single platform to help veterinary teams keep track of patient history, treat patients, communicate with clients and internal teams, and track business analytics.

Instinct Treatment Plan is a standalone digital command center for both outpatient and inpatient treatments, enabling veterinary teams to track each patient's progress, streamline treatment processes with auto-filled notes, previous visits, and vaccines, and automate charge capture and billing from treatment to invoice.

WhiskerCloud (now part of PetDesk)

Founder:

Adam Greenbaum

Learn more:

petdesk.com

From the Company:

PetDesk's platform now extends beyond client communication—encapsulating an array of services tailored to elevating practice operations and client engagement strategies.

With the expanded PetDesk suite, you can enhance your online visibility with a custom website and digital marketing, streamline your communication systems with customizable reminders, connect your phone system to your PIMS with smart VoIP, and provide convenient 24/7 appointment booking capabilities.

These tools are designed to simplify your daily tasks, attract and retain more clients, and ultimately allow you to focus on providing exceptional pet care. A testament to our commitment to transforming veterinary medicine, our toolset ensures that your clinic is equipped with the best technology to meet the needs of the modern pet owner.

Digitail

Founders:

Sebastian Gabor
and Ruxandra Pui

Learn more:

digitail.com

From the Company:

Digitail, a member of the AAHA Strategic Alliance Program, is an all-in-one, cloud-based practice management software with built-in AI capabilities and a native app for clients. It is designed to maximize productivity and deliver modern experiences to veterinary teams, pet owners, and their companions at every step of the patient journey. Equipped with an AI-powered virtual assistant, Digitail automates routine administrative tasks, cuts down staff's workload, and lets them focus on what they do best—providing exceptional care. At the same time, the Digitail app puts essential pet care information into the hands of pet owners, improving communication and increasing compliance.

delivery of high-quality care to patients, reinforcing the clinic's commitment to excellence in veterinary medicine. The adoption of AI in creating SOAP notes is a prime example of how technology can be utilized to not just improve the operational facets of veterinary practice but also to cultivate a more dynamic, satisfied, and cohesive team.

The use of AI within veterinary practices signifies a transformative shift towards greater operational efficiency, enhanced patient care, and a revitalized workplace culture. Automating different processes using AI frees veterinarians to focus more on patient interactions, fostering a collaborative and innovative environment.

This not only improves diagnostic and treatment

The use of AI within veterinary practices signifies a transformative shift towards greater operational efficiency, enhanced patient care, and a revitalized workplace culture.

outcomes but also addresses the challenges of demand surges and professional burnout, marking a significant step in veterinary medicine's evolution. As the veterinary field continues to embrace AI, the promise of a future where technology and

veterinary expertise combine to improve both practice efficiency and patient outcomes becomes increasingly tangible. The integration of AI is not just an operational upgrade but a catalyst for comprehensive enhancement in veterinary medicine. ■



A REMINDER: IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR AAHA MEMBERSHIP

Don't let your AAHA membership lapse and miss out on exclusive benefits!

RENEWAL DEADLINE IS JUNE 30 — aaha.org/renew

Email aaha@aaha.org for support and payment plan details.



HOME TEAM / EPIC WINS

Igniting Epic Wins

Set the Groundwork for Genius Moves

BY M. CAROLYN MILLER

In the world of gaming, an epic win occurs when a player pulls off an act of daring brilliance, often after multiple failed attempts. These wins occur slowly over long periods of time and shift the game itself. Think about the underdog player who wins the World Cup or the chess opponent who makes a strategic move that enables a surprise win.

In the marketplace, epic wins produce products and/or services that disrupt and change the market itself. Apple transformed the computer industry. Electric cars are transforming the automobile industry. And electronic records systems have changed the way practices record patient information.

When COVID hit, many practices tried and failed again and again to come up with solutions that would enable them to serve their patients and customers

effectively and safely. But in that tsunami of challenges, epic wins began to emerge.

Practices identified what tasks could be done safely and/or remotely and the result was often a new, more streamlined workflow: Curbside check-ins; telehealth consults, new apps, the list goes on. What was created were genius ways to see patients and their owners while staying healthy and to enable staff to continue to do their jobs. Everywhere you looked, epic wins were occurring. This is what happens in a crisis.

But now that the crisis has settled, how can you ensure that epic wins continue? Indeed, how can you set the stage to build bench strength and be ready for the next challenge? The answer lies in understanding what triggers epic wins in the first place.

Epic wins don't come out of the

blue, even if they seem to. At the heart of such wins is the human potential for creative genius that lies like a sleeping giant in every employee. Your job is to unleash this power and make them normal operating procedure so that when the next crisis occurs, your practice will be ready.

What is Creative Genius?

In 2012, Richard Florida, a regional economic development expert, identified a segment of the US population he called “the creative class,” in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Florida defined this class as those who use their creative capital in various ways—from creating original works to finding creative solutions in the workplace.

Florida believes that every job can be “creatified,” that is, that everyone has the genius to

Every staff person in your practice is capable of epic wins.

come up with epic wins. No doubt you saw some of those during the pandemic.

At the heart of that genius is what Korn Ferry, an international management consulting firm, calls “the Potential Code.” They describe this as the ability of every employee to go beyond the role you hired them for, to rise to new challenges, and to achieve more than you or they thought possible.

How to Unleash Epic Wins

In fact, every staff person in your practice is capable of epic wins.

Epic wins demand a very specific container for them to emerge, and the pandemic created that. Everyone was working toward a common cause. There was no room or time or patience for toxic behavior. All solutions, even the outlandish ones, were entertained without judgment.

Want to set the stage today for epic wins today, before the next challenge? Below are some ways to do just that.

Enroll staff in your practice vision and mission

It’s easy to get caught up in day-to-day operations and forget what all the work and time and resources are for. That’s why it’s

helpful to take a time-out regularly to remind everyone about why you do what you do. Moreover, if possible, encourage staff to go one step further. Ask them how each of them contributes to that purpose.

Create a safe container for epic wins to occur

“Psychological safety” is defined as “the belief that you won’t be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes,” by The Center for Creative Leadership, a global executive consulting company. It is critical for creating epic wins. It also demands vulnerability not only from staff but also from practice owners and managers who can show staff how to do this by modeling the behavior themselves.

Offer intrinsic motivation

Most creative people are motivated intrinsically, notes Florida, driven by personal satisfaction and enjoyment rather than external rewards. So, too, are many who work in the veterinary medicine field. But each of us has our own personal motivators, be it a need for autonomy or a desire to learn and teach others that is the “how” to that larger purpose. Ask staff what theirs is, and then identify how you can provide it. ■





PODCAST / **JULIE BUZBY, DVM**

Senior Dogs, Super Moms, and Singular Service

A Conversation with Julie Buzby, DVM

INTERVIEW BY KATIE BERLIN, DVM

Julie Buzby, DVM, is a mom and homeschooler of eight kids, a small business owner, and a former practice owner. Buzby wears a lot of hats but she seems perfectly at home in each one—and truthfully doesn't even seem to think of them as different. This warm, down-to-earth veterinarian leads with a quiet grace, and if you don't know her, you'll soon know why photos and stories from her Veterinary Encouragement Conference flood social media every year.

Katie Berlin, DVM: I have Dr. Julie Buzby here with me today. And Dr. Julie is a really special guest because it was her podcast that I was on as my very first podcasting experience. And clearly I caught the bug because there's been a lot of podcasting since then. Julie, would you mind giving our readers, watchers, and listeners a little background on yourself and what it is you're passionate about?

Julie Buzby, DVM: I'm a veterinarian. I graduated from Kansas State University in 1997. I had worked for equine veterinarians all through high school and vet school, and they did chiropractic and acupuncture in addition to just a traditional full service equine practice. And I was always the one holding the horse and watching them respond and listening to the riders. So I was fully on board with integrative practice and soon after graduation, got certified through the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association and did certification in acupuncture through IVAS (International Veterinary Acupuncture Society).

I wanted zero kids. I don't even like kids, but God had other plans

and I have eight kids. And I also never wanted to own a business. I love it when everybody's happy, but I'm nonconfrontational and not good as a boss. So I didn't want to own my own business, but I owned my own practice for almost 10 years. And now through a crazy turn of events, I have a business that's sort of related to the veterinary industry. And so that's what I do to stay busy.

KB: And there's a little thing on the side you do, the Veterinary Encouragement Conference, where a lot of moms come together and do amazing things and have a really incredible time. Can you talk about that a little?

JB: Many of the things I see mom vets go through are things that I can relate to. I've been there, I've cried those tears, I've lost those nights of sleep. My heart is with these women. During COVID, seeing the isolation that all of us were experiencing, I was thinking: What can I do for this group of women who I love?

It was during COVID and so nobody was really thinking about conferences. We had 18 months to plan the Veterinarian

“There are so many things that we share in common, but the walk is a little bit different for everybody and we can support each other in that.”

Julie Buzby, DVM

Encouragement Conference for moms. The goal was encouragement and focus on community. Many of the moms left saying it was more like a retreat than a conference. I was really happy with that analysis, because that was my goal: Even though we're all over the world, and in different walks of life—different ages, different places—we still really understand each other's lives very uniquely.

KB: I've heard nothing but amazing things about the conference. I'm not a mom, but I see that in people I'm very close to that I've worked alongside in the clinic, that they're just torn in two directions all the time. I love the idea of being able to embrace all of that, in one place and feel like you're in solidarity with all these other people who understand deeply. That's something I think we all discovered that we needed during COVID, not just moms. So I love that, and I hope you can keep doing it for a long, long time because it looks like you're doing good for a lot of moms.

JB: It's been a huge blessing for me. It's that kind of thing where you're

like, let me do this to be helpful, but you're the one who gets the most out of it. It's been fabulous.

KB: Okay, so, you have the conference, you have Dr. Buzby's ToeGrips, which is the business that you referred to. You ran a vet clinic, you have eight kids. There's a lot of layers to you, but you're always wearing some kind of hat in those layers. Is there a place that you can go where you're just Julie and you don't have to have a title?

JB: That's a great question, and I'm going to say no. But the good news is, every day is full of challenges. I really am thankful to be at a place—I was not always here—but I'm in a place where I'm just content in my life. My battery recharging is part of my everyday life. So just picking up my dog and cuddling him for five minutes, that's me time.

When I work with ToeGrips and my team, it's so fulfilling for me, because I get to use the creative side of my brain. I'm a massive extrovert, and we're planning a big trade show season, so I know I'll be working with people and seeing people. All of these things that are just a part of my daily schedule are a place where I find comfort and rest and fulfillment.

KB: That's wonderful. That's really a good point to make. For some people, balance could look like a complete absence of balance for other people. If you're happy in your life, then it doesn't matter what anyone else's ideas and boundaries are.

JB: I think that's a really great point to recognize that we all bring our own individual personalities, values, experiences. There are

so many things that we share in common, but the walk is a little bit different for everybody and we can support each other in that.

KB: One thing I wanted to ask you about was, when you're dealing with senior pets, you're dealing with a lot of memories and emotional attachment, fear of judgment, and the bittersweetness of watching your pet age. Those nuances make senior care a special art. ToeGrips are a small product that sometimes you won't even notice, and at the same time they can make such a huge difference. Can you talk a little bit about if you have a special love for senior pets and what motivated you to make this your business?

JB: Yes. Because I was certified in chiropractic and acupuncture, I was seeing mostly senior patients that were coming from mobility and pain management. And you nailed it. The reason I was so drawn to this group is because the people had this lifetime of stories with this animal.

Life progresses at this rapid, crazy breakneck speed and things happen. So the dog has been through these milestones, maybe a divorce where the dog was there for them more than a human. It's almost like a sacred relationship where this dog is their anchor in their life.

Often people would come as a last resort, saying, we need help or this dog's going to get put to sleep. So I am like, okay, good, we've got tools in the toolbox. We've got some things we can try. Then I would work with their regular vet, and we would coordinate care. But the thing that I could never really impact was slipping, because slipping is a biomechanical problem.

I would tell people to line their house with yoga mats or carpet runners, and that works. The problem is these dogs often run hot and they like to go lie on the cold hard floors. And then they have to get up off the cold hard floors. So ToeGrips are traction that travels, they can go anywhere, including to the vet's office and have the security and the traction that they need. There's the physical component of being able to move well, but also there's the emotional component of confidence that means for the dog.

The best solution is typically the simplest solution that still works. So they're simple, they're minimally obtrusive, and because they're just on the nail tips and they're not covering skin or soft tissue, dogs almost always, like very, very rarely is this an issue. They just don't even notice them.

"The best solution is typically the simplest solution that still works."

Julie Buzby, DVM



KB: This is not a commercial for ToeGrips, but I think it's important that we talk about them because to me, they are symbolic of what we talk about when it comes to senior care, which is the bond, how little things can make a huge difference, how people can be really resistant to treatment for all sorts of reasons, even if they love their dog so much. ToeGrips are actually just little tiny tubes, and they go on each nail and they're like little grippies, like those yoga socks with toes, except that they don't cover the foot.

You had mentioned that sometimes you get calls from people who are returning the ToeGrips because dog passed away or whatever reason. And that's another thing I wanted to talk to you about because you're known

for your customer service and that's super important to you.

JB: Thank you for even calling that out because that's more important to me than anything else we could talk about. It was the same when I owned a veterinary practice. There's a proverb that says a good name is worth far more than great riches. That's my mantra for how we run the company.

In social media reviews, it just makes me so happy to hear people say I bought a 30-some-dollar product and they treated me like a million dollar customer. That was one of our reviews. You can't go wrong with old-fashioned customer service.

KB: I agree. And you end up gaining a lot more than you

would ever give away, even in accommodating a customer request that might cost you a little bit at that time. I still remember an interaction I had with a Zappos customer service representative, like 10 years ago, because they were so great to me on the phone. I don't even shop at Zappos very much, but if I do, I'm very confident. And I want that too, for people who are dealing with the business that I'm a part of.

JB: I think it's really important, especially in this day and age of veterinary medicine, to distinguish that that doesn't mean you let clients bully you or bully your staff—absolutely not. But so many issues can be proactively avoided or calmly resolved with good communication. That's probably

“In social media reviews, it just makes me so happy to hear people say I bought a 30-some-dollar product and they treated me like a million dollar customer. That was one of our reviews. You can’t go wrong with old-fashioned customer service.”

Julie Buzby, DVM

the number one recipe for great customer service.

KB: Have you ever been the person, like the client whose head was exploding, and you’re saying okay, if they just treated this interaction a little differently, I would not be feeling like my head is going to explode right now?

JB: Yes. I was just rear-ended, and I had no intention of getting a lawyer, because, God bless the lawyers, but that’s not who I am, and that’s not who I want to be. I am just going to get my car fixed. But I could not get the other insurance company to call me back for 13 days.

KB: What?

JB: After about day eight of calling, calling, calling, and no communication, I’m like, “I’m getting a lawyer.” Not because I’m suing anybody, but I just need someone to help me with this communication, because I can’t even, we’re not having communication. So, this insurance company is going to end up paying

more money, because now they’re going to pay his fees and fix my car, etc. Had they just respectfully communicated with me off the bat and transparently, they would have saved so much money, but they just obviously have some problems in their processes that they were not on the ball.

KB: For me, it was always a pharmacy. For some reason, when I lived in Texas I just had the biggest issues getting a prescription filled at the Albertsons pharmacy in Dallas. I didn’t understand why it was so hard. No one was explaining it to me, and they were acting like I’m being a problem. Then I became a problem.

They could have had it filled or they could have treated me well and I could have just gone about my day. Instead, there was a bad interaction, then my head was just—poof—spiny and poisonous like a puffer fish. That is exactly what happened. That’s where so much of the negative client interactions we have come from—it just was going to take that one little thing, then that client puffer-fishes and it’s too late to make it not happen.

JB: I have a proverb for that one, too: A gentle answer turns away wrath. I was customer service for ToeGrips for the first two years. I mean, I was answering the emails, I was fielding it all. And it was rare, but if we had somebody who was puffer-fished, fired up, I like 99.99% of the time, this works. If I would just listen and show empathy, take responsibility for what I needed to and just be gentle. Instantly their tone would come down and we could have a logical conversation and accomplish something.

KB: Yeah, you just want to be treated like your opinion is important and like your time and experience are important. And it’s very hard to be rude to somebody who’s being really genuinely nice to you.

JB: That’s a great point.

KB: Okay, so you mentioned your team. You have a lot going on in your life. Do you have help? You have a team that helps you with ToeGrips, so you’re not customer service anymore. You have eight kids that you homeschool. Do you have help doing those things, so you don’t have to be 12 places at once?

JB: Yes, I completely believe that it takes a village. Many of us as

veterinarians think we can do it all, that we're the super people, but we're not—or at least I'm not. In the beginning, I couldn't afford help. My husband and I were shipping ToeGrips off of our kitchen table.

It was that classic start of a small business, but as we grew and we were able to hire people, that was such a gift, not only to free up time, but also to make us more efficient and more scalable. In my personal life, my husband's very much involved.

I also had someone in my life, Brittany, for a decade. She wanted to be a homeschool mom someday. She was married, but her husband worked a lot, and so she spent a ton of time with her family, and she worked for us.

And the cool thing is, through that interaction and probably through watching me suture my children on the kitchen table—she decided she was going to nursing

school. Brittany now is in nursing school, and the kids are also older, so we don't have anybody helping us at home as much, but it still feels like that village where I've got friends or neighbors who are picking somebody up or driving someone here. I actually teach two days a week, just a class two days a week in a homeschooling co-op.

KB: That's nice because, again, it has the community of parents coming together, using their strengths, and helping a bunch of people learn.

You said you're not superwoman. If anyone is superwoman in this industry, I think it might be you, Julie Buzby. You had talked about your conference, it's got the word "encouragement" in the title. We hear the word "empowerment" a lot. Are empowerment and encouragement the same to you, or are they different things?

JB: Not for me, because empowerment, to me, often comes through education, and that's your experience. Encouragement's all about the heart. My brain's not much a part of it. Raising eight humans, when they were babies, I had full control. I dictated how our life was going to go. Now, I have six teenagers, and if I've learned anything, it's I don't have much control over this situation.

KB: Or your refrigerator.

JB: True, true. With ToeGrips, I'm so blessed by the trajectory that we've been on, and the amazing people we work with, but nothing's perfect. There are things that come up, whether it be that one rare, nasty customer interaction, or finding out that there's a competitor who's playing dirty.

So, I struggle greatly with discouragement on a daily basis, and I'm so thankful for the people that build encouragement into me. Professionally, I think we need a real gigantic, healthy dose of it—but it's not empowerment, even though that's also important.

KB: I love what you've said. Thinking about what empowerment would mean to me, it's always to do something: to be more, do more, learn more, and that's great. But when you're feeling discouraged, it can be really exhausting to think about having to be empowered to go do something.

Encouragement implies that you are just giving the person support when they're sinking a little bit, and they don't have to be anything other than what they are right now. So many of us feel that we have to be striving for something, and just having



somebody say, “no, you’re enough, you can do it, I can help you, and I understand”; it’s very powerful.

JB: Yes, helping doesn’t necessarily mean I’m going to help you achieve something greater, more, or the next level, I’m just going to help you by listening, by hugging you, by validating your feelings. I’m just going to help you by being near you. It’s just a heart matter for me.

KB: You don’t need any special skills to do it, you just need to be there. I love learning things, and sometimes I need to remind myself just to slow down, and have somebody maybe encourage me, just to chill. And I don’t have eight kids, so I think if I had eight kids, I would definitely want to chill, and not have any time to do it, so. It’s always looking over into the other person’s yard, and trying to see, what they’re dealing with, and then encourage them when they’re doing that, and not what you would think they should be doing.

KB: And Julie, you seem like one of the most open, generous people. Every interaction that we’ve ever had, you just light up when you talk to people. I know you’re an extrovert, and when you ask questions, you really want to know the answer. That is a really special gift, so I’m really glad that it’s you who had these ideas, and you who are really taking on extra work to encourage as many people as possible.

JB: Well, thank you, I am not perfect, but I do think we can all do something to encourage someone, I really believe that.

KB: I love it. I think that’s the best takeaway there could possibly be from today, and I hope that it

Links Mentioned in This Article

Dr. Buzby’s Toe Grips
toegrips.com

Veterinary Encouragement Conference
vetmomencouragementce.com

inspires somebody to go out and just say, “Hey, that person looks like they could need a little boost, and I’m gonna be the boost.”

JB: I love it. Thank you.

KB: Julie, thank you for being a light in this profession, and you’re a quiet light, you don’t seem to want to be in the spotlight, but generously provide encouragement to anybody who needs it.

We do offer ToeGrips in the AAHA store, but it’s a link that will take them to your site, and that’s really important to you. Would you just mention why that is?

JB: For 10 years, we never sold ToeGrips on Amazon. On our own site, we can control the customer journey, we can control the response that the customer gets if there’s a problem. On Amazon, we can’t, because they want to be in control of all that. Unfortunately, we have had other companies just take our name, take our tagline, and infringe on our patent. So finally, last November, we went on Amazon just to defend our product and our IP. That is why we’re there, so people who are searching see us and don’t just buy a competitor product that doesn’t have the support and all the years of research

and background that we do.

We have a retail store, we also have wholesale for veterinarians, so veterinarians can buy wholesale for themselves, for their technicians, or obviously for their clients. Even if ToeGrips are not the right product for a patient, I can almost guarantee you that the client will walk away feeling valued and feeling like they had a good experience, and so I’m really proud to be able to offer that ancillary kind of service to practices who carry our products.

KB: That’s such a good indicator of who you are as a person. I really appreciate your time, and wisdom, and all of the things that you do for our community. ■


CareCredit®
a Synchrony solution

Central Line is generously supported by CareCredit. Catch the full episode, and every other episode of *Central Line: The AAHA Podcast*, on major podcast platforms, YouTube, and at aaha.org/podcast.

revolution[®] PLUS

(selamectin and sarolaner topical solution)

CAUTION:

Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

INDICATIONS:

REVOLUTION PLUS is indicated for the prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*. REVOLUTION PLUS kills adult fleas (*Ctenocephalides felis*) and is indicated for the treatment and prevention of flea infestations, the treatment and control of tick infestations with *Amblyomma americanum* (lone star tick), *Amblyomma maculatum* (Gulf Coast tick), *Dermacentor variabilis* (American dog tick), and *Ixodes scapularis* (black-legged tick), the treatment and control of ear mite (*Otodectes cynotis*) infestations, and the treatment and control of roundworm (*Toxocara cati*) and intestinal hookworm (*Ancylostoma tubaeforme*) infections for one month in cats and kittens 8 weeks and older, and weighing 2.8 pounds or greater.

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

There are no known contraindications for the use of REVOLUTION PLUS.

WARNINGS:**Human warnings:**

Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children.

Do not come into contact with or allow children to contact the application site until 4 hours post application.

In humans, REVOLUTION PLUS may be irritating to skin and eyes. REVOLUTION PLUS and selamectin topical solution contain isopropyl alcohol and the preservative butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT). Reactions such as hives, itching and skin redness have been reported in humans after accidental dermal contact with selamectin topical solution. Individuals with known hypersensitivity to selamectin topical solution should use caution or consult a health care professional before applying this product on a cat. **Wash hands after use and wash off any product in contact with the skin immediately with soap and water.** If contact with eyes occurs, then flush eyes copiously with water; if wearing contact lenses, rinse the eyes first then remove contact lenses and continue to rinse for 5 – 10 minutes and seek medical attention. In case of ingestion by a human, contact a physician immediately. The safety data sheet (SDS) provides more detailed occupational safety information. For a copy of the SDS or to report a suspected adverse reaction, call Zoetis at 1-888-963-8471.

Flammable - Keep away from heat, sparks, open flames or other sources of ignition.

PRECAUTIONS:

Sarolaner, one of the ingredients in REVOLUTION PLUS, is a member of the isoxazoline class. This class has been associated with neurologic adverse reactions including tremors, ataxia, and seizures. Neurologic adverse reactions have been reported in cats receiving isoxazoline class drugs, even in cats without a history of neurologic disorders. Use with caution in cats with a history of neurologic disorders.

The safe use of REVOLUTION PLUS has not been evaluated in kittens less than 8 weeks of age. The safe use of REVOLUTION PLUS has not been evaluated in breeding, pregnant, or lactating cats.

ADVERSE REACTIONS:

In a field safety and effectiveness study, REVOLUTION PLUS was administered to cats with fleas. The study included a total of 430 cats (282 treated with REVOLUTION PLUS and 148 treated with imidacloprid + moxidectin once monthly for three treatments). Over the 90-day study period, all observations of potential adverse reactions were recorded. Reactions reported in the REVOLUTION PLUS group included those presented in the following table.

Adverse Reactions by Treatment Group

Adverse Reaction	REVOLUTION PLUS (n = 282)	Imidacloprid + moxidectin (n=148)
Lethargy	12 (4.3%)	1 (0.7%)
Skin lesions*	10 (3.5%)	3 (2.0%)
Anorexia	9 (3.2%)	3 (2.0%)
Pruritus	7 (2.5%)	3 (2.0%)
Conjunctivitis	7 (2.5%)	1 (0.7%)
Sneezing	6 (2.1%)	1 (0.7%)
Administration site hair changes (alopecia)	5 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Administration site lesions (scabbing)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)

*Lesions not associated with application site.

In a second field safety and effectiveness study, REVOLUTION PLUS was administered to 124 cats with ear mites. Adverse reactions in cats treated with REVOLUTION PLUS included emesis, dermatitis and eczema, and pruritus.

In a third field safety and effectiveness study, REVOLUTION PLUS was administered to 70 cats with hookworms. Adverse reactions in cats treated with REVOLUTION PLUS included diarrhea, anorexia, emesis, and lethargy.

Post-Approval Experience (2022)

The following adverse events are based on post-approval adverse drug experience reporting for REVOLUTION PLUS. Not all adverse events are reported to FDA/CVM. It is not always possible to reliably estimate the exposure using these data.

The following adverse events reported in cats are listed in decreasing order of reporting frequency:

Application site reactions (including alopecia, lesions, erythema, and pruritus), lethargy, anorexia, vomiting, generalized pruritus, behavioral disorders (including hiding, hyperactivity, and vocalization), ataxia, muscle tremor, diarrhea, generalized alopecia, and seizure.

Contact Information

To report adverse reactions call Zoetis Inc. at 1-888-963-8471. For additional information about adverse drug experience reporting for animal drugs, contact FDA at 1-888-FDA-VETS or <http://www.fda.gov/reportanimalae>.

ANIMAL SAFETY:

Margin of Safety Studies: One exploratory and two pivotal margin of safety studies were conducted with REVOLUTION PLUS. In the first study, REVOLUTION PLUS was applied topically to kittens eight weeks of age at doses of 12/2 (selamectin/sarolaner) mg/kg (1X), 36/6 mg/kg (3X), 45/7.5 mg/kg (3.75X), and 60/10 mg/kg (5X) every 28 days for eight consecutive doses. One female cat in the 3.75X group was found dead on study day 115. The cause was determined to be hemorrhage in multiple tissues secondary to a low platelet count. The role of the drug in contributing to this event is undetermined. No significant changes related to REVOLUTION PLUS were observed among the remaining cats for physical examination, body weight, clinical pathology (hematology, coagulation, and serum chemistry), gross pathology, histopathology or organ weights.

In the second study, REVOLUTION PLUS was applied topically to cats 9 months of age at doses of 1X, 3X, and 5X every 28 days for six consecutive doses. Cosmetic changes at the application site occurred sporadically in all treatment groups and included wet appearance and dried white material. Hair loss at the dose site was also noted in two cats in the 1X group and one cat in the 5X group within 1-8 days after the fourth dose administered on day 84. No significant changes related to REVOLUTION PLUS were observed for physical examination, body weight, clinical pathology (hematology, coagulation, and serum chemistry).

During an exploratory margin of safety study, one cat in the 60 mg/kg/ 10 mg/kg (selamectin/sarolaner) group (5X dose group) experienced piloerection, tremors, and mydriasis approximately 24 hours after receiving the third monthly dose of the combination. Signs resolved without treatment within 2 hours. This cat completed the study, receiving 3 subsequent 5X doses with no abnormal observations.

Oral safety study: The safety of REVOLUTION PLUS administered orally to kittens was tested in case of accidental oral ingestion. Oral administration of the highest recommended topical dose of REVOLUTION PLUS to kittens resulted in transient lower food consumption and clinical findings of emesis, soft feces, and salivation. In one male, mild tremor was observed and resolved within 3 hours after dosing; the same cat demonstrated reduced activity approximately 6 hours after dosing.

Heartworm Positive Cat Safety of Selamectin: Selamectin is the active ingredient in REVOLUTION PLUS that prevents heartworm disease in cats; it has been shown that the addition of sarolaner does not interfere with this activity. In a safety study in which selamectin topical solution was applied at 4 times the recommended dose to patent heartworm infected cats, no adverse reactions were observed.

Field safety: In three well-controlled field studies, REVOLUTION PLUS was used concurrently with other medications, such as vaccines, cestocidal anthelmintics, antibacterials, sedatives, anesthetics, opioid analgesics, corticosteroids, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories. No adverse reactions were associated with the concurrent use of REVOLUTION PLUS and other medications.

STORAGE CONDITIONS:

Store at or below 30°C (86°F).

HOW SUPPLIED:

Available in three separate dose strengths for cats of different weights (see **DOSE AND ADMINISTRATION**). REVOLUTION PLUS is available in cartons containing one, three, or six single dose tubes. The amount of liquid in tube varies for each weight range (2.8 - 5.5 lbs, 5.6 - 11 lbs, 11.1 - 22 lbs). Tubes are never completely filled.

Approved by FDA under NADA # 141-502

Revised: November 2023

zoetis

Distributed by:
Zoetis Inc.
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
40043225A&P

Advertisers

AAHA Learning 62

aaha.org/education/all-veterinary-professionals/beyond-medicine-workshop

AAHA Membership 51

aaha.org/renew

Alera Group 31

aleragroup.com

Animal Health Options 10

animalhealthoptions.com

CareCredit Inside Back Cover

carecredit.com/vetinsights

GlobalVetLink 63

globalvetlink.com

Hill's Pet Nutrition 9

hillsvet.com/pet-nutrition/derm

Medi-Dose® /EPS 25

MediDose.com

Midmark 3

midmark.com

MWI Animal Health 19-21

allydvm.com/telehealth

Provet Cloud Inside Front Cover

provet.cloud

Purina® Pro Plan® Veterinary Diets 1

ProPlanVetSupport.com

Rx Vitamins 23

rxvitamins.com

Veterinary Hospital Managers

Association 39

vhma.org

Wellness Pet Company 7

whimzees.com

Zoetis 61, Back Cover

RevolutionPlusDVM.com

Trends magazine is not responsible for contact information not specifically provided by an advertiser for use in the Advertiser Index or for other company contact information not listed in this index. Please contact the advertiser directly for all product information.



BEYOND MEDICINE WORKSHOP

ENHANCING YOUR VETERINARY PRACTICE THROUGH MENTORSHIP

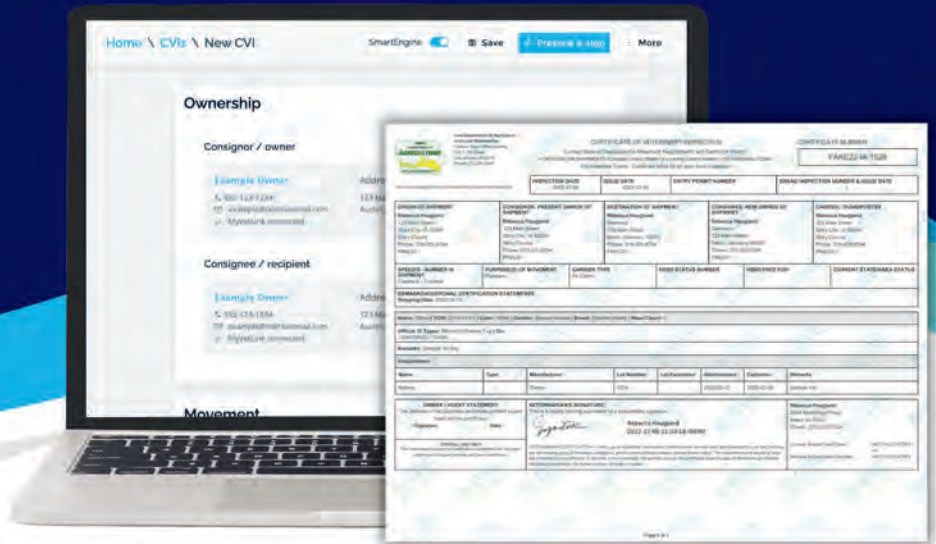
Featuring James Desir, DVM
and Alyssa Mages, CVT

FOUR CHANCES TO ATTEND:

MAY 18 / JUNE 1 / JULY 13 / AUGUST 3

3 Hours RACE approved
and VHMA approved CE





Eliminate the time and hassle associated with compliance documentation

GlobalVetLink is your intelligent online regulatory compliance platform for managing animal health and movement



Over **10,000 companion, equine, and production veterinary practices** use GVL's intelligent online regulatory compliance platform to manage the complexities involved with animal health and movement



Improve **compliance accuracy** and **reduce time** spent on administering certificates and documentation

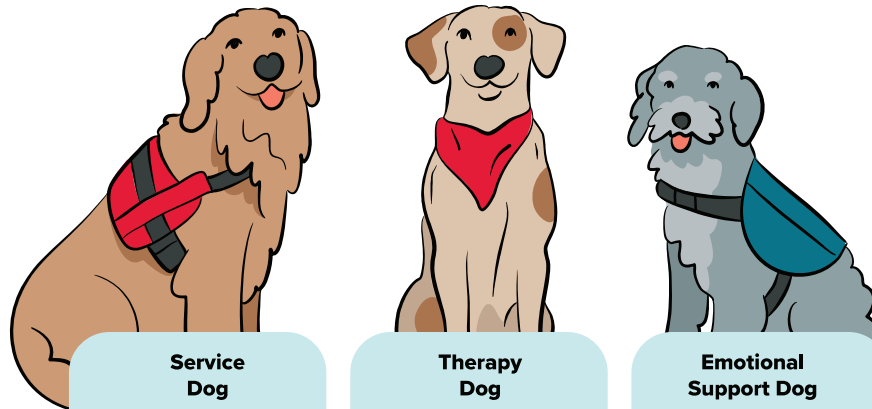
Get started today at globalvetlink.com





Assistance Dogs: Who's Who?

Do you know your working dogs? This handy chart from the *2021 AAHA Working, Assistance, and Therapy Dog Guidelines Toolkit* shows some key differences between working dog types.



	Service Dog	Therapy Dog	Emotional Support Dog
Examples	Guide dog for the blind, seizure or diabetic alert dog, autism support dog	Dogs who are part of speech or occupational therapy, dogs who visit hospital patients and nursing homes	Can be any dog that alleviates symptoms of emotional or mental stress
Recognized as a service animal by the ADA?	✓ Yes	✗ No	✗ No
Special training requirements?	✓ Yes	Not per the ADA; individual certifications may vary	✗ No
Access permitted to "no pets" areas?	✓ Yes	✗ No	Depends
Medical management goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize when treatments may impact ability to work Allow clients to be present at exams Adjust communication to handler's disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize when treatments may impact ability to work Avoid zoonotic disease and deworm regularly Avoid raw diets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on canine standard of care Emphasize preventive care Make behavioral recommendations consistent with dog's role Ensure dog has stable temperament

SIGN ME UP FOR

*offering financing
as friendly as Franklin.*

Flexible financing. Simple, convenient monthly payments. And the comfort of knowing they can move forward with care. That's the CareCredit experience. **Call 844-812-8111 to apply to enroll.** And if you're already enrolled, remind your clients that you offer this flexible financing option.



YOU CAN LEARN MORE AT
carecredit.com/vetinsights

TO APPLY CALL US AT
844-812-8111

 **CareCredit**
a Synchrony solution

Reasons You Love Revolution Plus

REASON #58



It kills more species of ticks than any other feline prescription preventative

Revolution Plus is now FDA approved to protect against 4 tick species.

- 1 Lone star tick **New Indication!**
- 2 Black-legged tick
- 3 Gulf Coast tick
- 4 American dog tick

revolution[®] PLUS 
(selamectin and sarolaner topical solution)



Find more reasons to love Revolution Plus at [RevolutionPlusDVM.com](https://www.RevolutionPlusDVM.com)

Revolution Plus is a non-greasy, easy-to-apply, quick-drying, small-volume, monthly topical solution that protects against fleas (*Ctenocephalides felis*), ticks (Black-legged or deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), Gulf Coast tick (*Amblyomma maculatum*), American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), Lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*), ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*), roundworms (*Toxocara cati*), hookworms (*Ancylostoma tubaeforme*), and heartworms (*Dirofilaria immitis*) for cats and kittens as young as 8 weeks of age and weighing 2.8 pounds or more.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: The safe use of Revolution Plus has not been established in kittens less than 8 weeks old or in breeding, pregnant or lactating cats. Reported side effects in clinical trials included lethargy and anorexia. Use with caution in cats with a history of neurologic disorders. Revolution Plus contains sarolaner, a member of the isoxazoline class, which has been associated with neurologic adverse reactions, such as tremors, ataxia, and seizures in cats with or without a history of neurologic disorders. In humans, Revolution Plus may be irritating to skin and eyes. See Brief Summary of Prescribing Information on page 61.

*Revolution Plus is veterinarians' #1 trusted choice in feline parasite protection, built upon the proven 20-year legacy protection of Revolution (selamectin).

Reference: 1. Data on file. Zoetis Inc.

All trademarks are the property of Zoetis Services LLC or a related company or a licensor unless otherwise noted.
© 2024 Zoetis Services LLC. All rights reserved. RVP-00446R2 A