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Journal Highlights Abstracts of 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 jaaaha.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.

Postmaster Trends magazine® (ISSN 1062-8266) is published 12 times per year (January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December) by the American Animal Hospital Association, at 1412 Denver West Parkway, Suite 245, Lakewood, CO 80401. Periodicals postage paid at Denver, 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 address changes to Trends magazine, 14142 Denver West Parkway, Suite 245, Lakewood, CO 80401.

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Dear Doctor and Staff,

You may have recently heard that Akorn Pharmaceuticals filed for bankruptcy. This will result in supply challenges not only for the Akorn branded products, but also any private labeled products manufactured by Akorn for veterinary distributors under their house brands.

As a result of Akorn’s situation and global supply challenges, Dechra has taken the initiative to increase inventory levels of all products to help ensure you have a continual supply of quality products to treat your patients and the highest level of customer service.

When it comes to a reliable source of high quality products, there is no substitute for Dechra. Thank you for your continued support and please reach out to your local Dechra Sales Representative if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your continued business,

Mike Eldred
President, Dechra North America

The Veterinary Perspective

We are pleased to inform you that Dechra has **significant inventory** of the products below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Euthaphen™ (Euthanasia Solution)</td>
<td>100 mL vial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dxmmedesed* (dexmedetomidine hydrochloride) Sterile Injectable Solution</td>
<td>0.5 mg/mL, 10 mL vial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torphadine* (butorphanol tartrate injection)</td>
<td>10 mg/mL, 50 mL vial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketamine Hydrochloride Injection</td>
<td>100 mg/mL, 10 mL vial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzed™ (tiletamine and zolazepam for injection)</td>
<td>100 mg/mL, 5 mL vial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isoflurane, USP Inhalation Anesthetic</td>
<td>250 mL bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevoflurane Inhalation Anesthetic</td>
<td>250 mL bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OphthHAvet* Complete Ophthalmic Gel</td>
<td>10 mL bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OphthHAvet* Ophthalmic Ointment</td>
<td>5 gram tube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OphthHAvet* Ophthalmic Solution</td>
<td>10 mL bottle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information please visit [www.dechra-us.com](http://www.dechra-us.com)

For Veterinary Technical Support Contact Dechra Veterinary Products at: 866-933-2472 or support@dechra.com

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by Nicole Scott-Jones
Solutions to Manage Dermatological Conditions

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Genetic insights. Early detection. Precision care.

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from the editor’s desk

HAPPY PRIDE MONTH!
Recruiting the right team is essential to a practice’s ultimate success. But what does the right team look like? Of course, the team should mesh and share certain values, but a team also can find strength in the members’ differences. It is critical to show individuals (e.g., pet owners) from different backgrounds that they are represented in the field of vet med.

To that point, our cover story delves into focusing recruitment efforts on finding those employees from diverse backgrounds. And who better to tell the story than Melody Martínez, CVT, president of the Multicultural Veterinary Medical Association?

Also fitting the theme of recruitment, another expert, Nicole Scott-Jones, penned a great article on using social media to hire the people you need. So if you are looking for employees—and who isn’t these days?—grab your copy of Trends and get started!

WE’RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD EMPLOYEES...
... to give $500 to! Have you entered our Employee of the Month contest yet? Eligible practices can enter the contest online by filling in a few details about why your employee is the best, and then we will randomly select one winner each month to win a $500 Amazon gift card, courtesy of our friends at CareCredit. If you don’t win, don’t worry, you can enter again the next month! Enter today at aaha.org/EOTM.

COMING NEXT MONTH
July brings the heat with articles on mentorship, staff retention, and client service. OK, those are not exactly heat-related, but they are hot topics, and we have some awesome writers lined up to tackle them. Don’t miss it!

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

—Ben Williams, Editor
Current combination flea-tick-heartworm products could compromise coverage, compliance, and doses purchased. Maybe it’s time for the right combination: better protection and more revenue for your practice.

Ask your Merck Animal Health representative about BRAVECTO® Chews and SENTINEL® SPECTRUM® Chews.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

BRAVECTO (fluralaner) Chews for Dogs: The most commonly reported adverse reactions include vomiting, lethargy, diarrhea, anorexia and pruritus. In some cases, adverse events have been reported following use in breeding females. BRAVECTO Chews has not been shown to be effective for 12-weeks’ duration in puppies less than 6 months of age. BRAVECTO Chews is not effective against lone star ticks beyond 8 weeks of dosing. Fluralaner is a member of the isoxazoline class. This class has been associated with neurologic adverse reactions including tremors, ataxia, and seizures. Seizures have been reported in dogs receiving isoxazoline class drugs, even in dogs without a history of seizures. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures or neurologic disorders. For full prescribing information, please see page 10.

SENTINEL® SPECTRUM® Chews (milbemycin oxime/lufenuron/praziquantel). Dogs should be tested for heartworm prior to use. Mild hypersensitivity reactions have been noted in some dogs carrying a high number of circulating microfilariae. Treatment with fewer than 6 monthly doses after the last exposure to mosquitoes may not provide complete heartworm prevention. For full prescribing information, please see page 11.
Mode of Action:
Bravecto began to kill fleas within two hours after administration in a well-controlled laboratory study. In a European laboratory study, Bravecto killed fleas and of live fleas and 90% effectiveness beyond 8 weeks.

Animal Safety:
administered orally to 8- to 9-week-old puppies at 1, 3, and 5X the maximum label dose of 56 mg/kg at three, 8-week intervals. The dogs in the control group (0X) were untreated.

Bravecto was administered orally to intact, Amblyomma americanum (American dog tick), during the 6 months of age and older, and weighing 4.4 pounds or greater. Bravecto has not been shown to be effective for 12-weeks duration in body weights, food consumption, reproductive performance, semen analysis, litter data, gross necropsy (adult dogs) or ... was observed on 17 occasions: in six treated dogs (11 occasions) after dosing and four control dogs (6 occasions).

Adverse Reaction
Description:
Bravecto (fluralaner) was used for 12 weeks. In a well-controlled laboratory study, Bravecto demonstrated 100% effectiveness against adult fleas 48 hours post-infestation for 12 weeks. In well-controlled laboratory studies, Bravecto demonstrated... effectiveness for 12 weeks. In well-controlled laboratory studies, Bravecto demonstrated effectiveness for 12 weeks.

Adverse Reactions:
Dogs with the AR<br>Vomiting 7.1 14.3<br>Diarrhea 8.5 14.2<br>Observe of the upper lips within one hour of receiving Bravecto. The edema improved progressively through the day and had resolved without medical intervention by the next morning.

Bravecto may be administered every 8 weeks in case of potential... Bravecto should be administered to dogs immediately after or in conjunction with a normal meal. To ensure adequate absorption, always administer SENTINEL SPECTRUM Chews to dogs immediately after or without chewing. Chewables may be broken into pieces and fed to dogs that normally swallow treats whole.

Body Weight Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Weight Ranges</th>
<th>mg</th>
<th>Chews Administered</th>
<th>Day 5 &amp; Day 7 Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 months of age and older, and weighing 4.4 pounds or greater.</td>
<td>112.5</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>12-weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 44.0 – 88.0</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>12-weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;44.0 – 88.0</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>12-weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;88.0 – 123.0</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>12-weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;123.0</td>
<td>Combination of chewables</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>12-weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no known contraindications for the use of the product.

Warnings:
For additional information about adverse drug experience reporting for... To obtain a copy of the Safety Data Sheet (SDS), contact Merck Animal Health at 1-800-224-5318.

For technical assistance, call Merck Animal Health at 1-800-224-5318. Additional information can be found at www.bravecto.com.

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For technical assistance, call Merck Animal Health at 1-800-224-5318. Additional information can be found at www.bravecto.com.
Caution: Federal (USA) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Description: Sentinel® Spectrum Chews are available in four strengths in color-coded packages for oral administration to dogs and puppies according to their weight. Each chewable flavored tablet is formulated to provide a minimum of 0.23 mg/kg (0.5 mg/kg) of milbemycin oxime, 4.55 mg/kg (10 mg/kg) of lufenuron, and 2.26 mg/kg (5 mg/kg) of praziquantel.

Milbemycin oxime is a member of the avermectin family of macrocyclic lactones, and is available for oral administration as a highly active anti-parasitic agent. Milbemycin oxime is a highly selective anthelmintic that is useful against a broad range of parasites.

Lufenuron is a benzoylphenylurea compound that is classified as an insect development inhibitor (IDI). Benzoylphenylurea compounds, including lufenuron, are classified as insect development inhibitors (IDIs).

Praziquantel is an isoxazoline anthelmintic with the chemical name 2-(Cyclohexylcarbonyl)-1,3,6,7-tetrahydro-4-phenyl-1H-pyrazino[1,2-a]pyrimidine-4-one.

Indications: Sentinel® Spectrum Chews are indicated for the prevention of heartworm disease caused by Dirofilaria immitis for the prevention and control of flea populations (Ctenocephalus felis), and for the treatment and control of adult roundworm (Toxocara canis, Toxocara cati), adult hookworm (Ankylostoma caninum, adult whipworm [Trichuris vulpis] and adult tapeworm (Taenia solium, T. pisiformis, Echinococcus multilocularis and Echinococcus granulosus) infections in dogs and puppies two pounds of body weight or greater and for at least 6 months after exposure to mosquitoes (see EFFECTIVENESS).

Dosage and Administration: Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered orally once, monthly, at least 6 months after the oral exposure to mosquitoes (see EFFECTIVENESS) and may be given with food. Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered using the correct chewable tablets for the appropriate dog weight (see table). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should not be divided or crushed.

To ensure adequate absorption, always administer Sentinel Spectrum Chews to dogs immediately after or in conjunction with a normal meal. Sentinel® Spectrum Chews may be offered to the dog by hand or added to a small amount of dog food. The chewables should be administered in a manner that encourages the dog to chew, rather than to swallow without chewing. Chewables may be broken into pieces and fed to dogs that normally swallow treats whole. Care should be taken that the dog consumes the complete dose, and treated animals should be observed for a few minutes following administration to ensure that no part of the dose is lost or rejected. If it is suspected that any of the dose has been lost, refeeding is recommended.

Heartworm Prevention: Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews may be administered without food. Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS). Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS).

Flea and Tick Control: Sentinel® Spectrum Chews should be administered at monthly intervals beginning within one month of the dog’s first seasonal exposure to mosquitoes and continuing until at least 6 months after the dog’s last seasonal exposure (see EFFECTIVENESS).

To minimize the likelihood of flea reinfection, it is important to treat all animals within a household with an approved flea prevention product, as necessary.

Intestinal Nematode and Cestode Treatment and Control: Dogs may be exposed to and can become infected with roundworms, whipworms, hookworms, and tapeworms throughout the year, regardless of season or climate. Clients should be advised of appropriate measures to prevent reinfection of their dog with intestinal parasites. Because the prepatent period for E. multilocularis may be as short as 26 days, dogs treated at the labeled monthly intervals may become reinfected and shed eggs between treatments.

Contraindications: There are no known contraindications to the use of Sentinel Spectrum Chews. Warnings: Not for use in humans. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children.

Precautions: Treatment with fewer than 6 monthly doses after the last exposure to mosquitoes may provide incomplete heartworm prevention (see EFFECTIVENESS).

Prior to administration of Sentinel Spectrum Chews, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection using an approved diagnostic test and treated to remove adult heartworms. Sentinel Spectrum Chews are not effective against adult J2 worms.

Mild, transient hypersensitivity reactions, such as labored breathing, vomiting, hyperventilation, and lethargy have been noted in some dogs treated with milbemycin oxime carrying a high number of circulating microfilariae. These reactions are presumably caused by release of protein from dead or dying microfilariae.

Do not use in puppies less than 6 weeks of age.

Do not use in dogs or puppies less than two pounds of body weight.

The safety of Sentinel Spectrum Chews has not been evaluated in dogs used for breeding or in lactating females. Studies have been performed with milbemycin oxide and lufenuron alone (see ANIMAL SAFETY).

Adverse Reactions: The following adverse reactions have been reported in dogs administered of milbemycin oxide, lufenuron, or praziquantel vomiting, depression/lethargy, anorexia, diarrhea, skin irritation, allergic reactions, and vomiting.

To report suspected adverse drug events, contact Merck Animal Health at 1-800-224-6371. For additional information about adverse drug experience reporting for animal drugs, reporting to FDA at 1-888-FDA-VETS or http://www.fda.gov/animal/animal-drugs.

For technical assistance, call Merck Animal Health at 1-800-224-5318.

Information for Owner or Person Treating Animal: Echinococcus multilocularis and Echinococcus granulosus are tapeworms found in wild canids and domestic dogs. E. multilocularis and E. granulosus can infect humans and cause serious disease (alveolar hydatid disease and hydatid disease, respectively). Owners of dogs living in areas where E. multilocularis or E. granulosus are endemic should be instructed on how to minimize their risk of exposure to these parasites, as well as their dog’s risk of exposure. Although Sentinel Spectrum Chews were 100% effective in laboratory studies in dogs against E. multilocularis and E. granulosus, no studies have been conducted to evaluate the use of this product will decrease the incidence of alveolar hydatid disease or hydatid disease in humans. Because the prepatent period for E. multilocularis may be as short as 26 days, dogs treated at the labeled monthly intervals may become reinfected and shed eggs between treatments.

Effective Use of Sentinel Spectrum Chews: In a well-controlled U.S. field study, a single dose of Sentinel Spectrum Chews reduced fleas by ≥67% in the 1X treatment group and ≥98% in the 2X treatment group. In the 2X treatment group, one of the two dogs treated in the 1X treatment group and one of the two dogs treated in the 2X treatment group developed pruritis, which is a common side effect of these products. Sentinel Spectrum Chews were 100% effective in laboratory studies in dogs against E. multilocularis and E. granulosus, no studies have been conducted to evaluate the use of this product will decrease the incidence of alveolar hydatid disease or hydatid disease in humans. Because the prepatent period for E. multilocularis may be as short as 26 days, dogs treated at the labeled monthly intervals may become reinfected and shed eggs between treatments.

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Encourage Technicians at All Levels

All recruitment is a challenge in the veterinary industry today, and credentialed veterinary technicians are one of the most elusive hires. Many of the most qualified individuals decide to leave the industry entirely, with the average technician staying in the field for only five to seven years. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the growth rate of available veterinary technician positions far exceeds the predictions for all other occupations.

Trained veterinary technicians are essential to the operation of any veterinary hospital, and it is imperative for the industry to create a sustainable career pathway for these talented professionals. Competitive compensation and benefits packages combined with increasing technician utilization and expanding job responsibilities may help stem the loss of technicians and encourage students to enter the field.

Professional associations should serve as a conduit to increase awareness of the need for uniform standards for veterinary technicians and licensure in all 50 states. Each state has its own Veterinary Practice Act that details the rules and regulations and permissible duties of veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

We need to encourage technicians to volunteer, adding their voices to and sharing their perspectives with various veterinary-affiliated associations. It is key for technicians to be at the center of leading this effort, detailing their experiences to create a team approach with all members of the veterinary field. Organized veterinary medicine must include technicians’ input and support their stature as professionals within the industry. Veterinary hospital owners and managers need to challenge each other to fully utilize the technicians within each practice and inspire them to engage in continuing education and maximize their skill sets.

Hiring from within and creating opportunities for talented team members has become a necessity for finding technicians. Keeping the talent in-house while supporting further education in programs such as AAHA-affiliated Distance Education Veterinary Technology Program benefits both the hospital and the aspiring technician. The employee continues to work in the practice while immediately implementing skills learned through class lessons. An opportunity to participate in these accredited programs benefits all parties.

Education comes with a cost, and the work-as-you-learn model helps to lighten the debt load upon completion of the program. Employers need to realize the high value a credentialed technician brings to the table and support motivated individuals early in their careers to achieve licensure or credentialing to help stem recruiting challenges moving forward.

Cheryl Smith, CVPM, is a director on the AAHA board. She earned her bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics from Cornell University in 1985 and entered the world of veterinary medicine when she married a veterinarian. In 1994, her husband opened Galway Veterinary Hospital in Galway, New York, and as their children grew, so did Smith’s involvement with the AAHA-accredited practice, where she now serves as hospital administrator. Smith became a certified veterinary practice manager in 2009, and she graduated from the Veterinary Management Institute in 2011. When not overseeing the management of Galway Veterinary Hospital, Smith dedicates her time to serving as a member of the Galway Board of Education, a position she’s held for more than 10 years.
How do you handle re-assigning caseloads when you have a departing doctor?

Our practice has a doctor leaving and we are scrambling to manage the coverage of their appointment calendar. We have tried several different approaches with varying levels of success, but ultimately, I am looking for a solution that won’t shake up staff and clients. Any insights or ideas that have worked for you all?

**A:** We have found that trying to book areas of opportunity in between patient needs has been successful. For example, on surgery days, scheduling a couple of drop-offs so the doctor can do an exam while waiting for an anesthesia patient has proven to be really helpful when playing catch-up.

**A:** In our practice we have expanded our search when looking to replace doctors to also include licensed technicians. In particular, we have utilized them for things like nail trims, basic procedures, and giving vaccine boosters if the pet has been examined by a vet within the last six months. It has been really helpful to unburden the doctors during those times of transition.

**Community**

AAHA members, add to the conversation at community.aaha.org. For help, email community@aaha.org.

This month in AAHA’s Publicity Toolbox . . .

Here are the downloadable social media images available for AAHA-accredited members at aaha.org/publicity this month:

- Pride Month
- Adopt a Cat Month
- Father’s Day
- June 18
- International Box Day
- June 19
- Juneteenth
- June 19
- Cat World Domination Day
- June 24
Tick Treatment and Control:
For the treatment and control of infestations with louse (Sarcoptes scabiei) and Amblyomma americanum (brown tick) in cats, NexGard® COMBO should begin at any time of year. NexGard® COMBO should be administered at least 30 minutes before any other anti-flea medication. Treatment and Control of Roundworms, Hookworms, and Tapeworms: NexGard® COMBO may be used to treat and control of roundworms (adult and four-stage larval) in cats, hookworms (adult and four-stage larval) in cats, and tapeworms (Echinococcus granulosus) in dogs. For the treatment of hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms in kittens, NexGard® COMBO should be administered once as a single dose. Monthly use of NexGard® COMBO will control any subsequent infestations with hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms. The treatment of adult worms can be exposed to and can become infected with hookworms, roundworms, and tapeworms throughout the year, regardless of season or climate.

Contraindications: There are no known contraindications for the use of NexGard® COMBO.

Human Warnings: Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of sight and reach of children. Do not use without medical advice.

In cats weighing less than 1.8 lbs (0.8 kg), the product should not be administered more than once weekly, due to the risk of vomiting and upset stomach. The safety of NexGard® COMBO in cats weighing less than 1.8 lbs (0.8 kg) has not been tested. The safety for use in cats less than 8 weeks of age has not been tested. The safety of NexGard® COMBO in lactating cats has not been tested.

Dosing Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat Weight (lb)</th>
<th>Volume (mL)</th>
<th>Esafoxolaner (mg)</th>
<th>Eprinomectin (mg)</th>
<th>Praziquantel (mg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.8-4.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5-7.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>149.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8-11.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>279.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1-16.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>349.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.6-22.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>538.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1-33.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>129.4</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>729.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A veterinarian or veterinary technician should demonstrate or instruct the pet owner regarding the appropriate technique for applying NexGard® COMBO topically to cats and kittens prior to use. Keep product in original package ready to use.

For the prevention of heartworm disease, NexGard® COMBO should be administered once every month regardless of season. For the prevention of heartworm disease, NexGard® COMBO should begin at least 3 months prior to exposure. The safety of NexGard® COMBO has not been tested in pregnant cats. The safety of NexGard® COMBO in lactating cats has not been tested.

Praziquantel is a pyrazinoisoquinoline anthelmintic. Its chemical name is 4-[4'-(1H-imidazol-1-yl)butyl]-4-[(1H-imidazol-1-yl)butyl]pyrazinoisoquinoline.

Adverse Reactions:
In a field safety and effectiveness study, which included a total of 201 households and 360 treated cats (244 cats treated with NexGard® COMBO, 136 cats treated with an active control), the safety of NexGard® COMBO was evaluated over a period of 28 days through reporting of abnormalities by the owner. The most frequently reported reactions in the NexGard® COMBO and active control groups are presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>NexGard® COMBO</th>
<th>Active Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperthermia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Ulceration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erythema</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypermobility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypersalivation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anorexia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dermatitis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pruritus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergic Reaction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pruritus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastroenteritis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Target Animal Safety:
Cats
NexGard® COMBO provides treatment and control of roundworms (adult and fourth stage larval) in cats, hookworms (adult and four-stage larval) in cats, and tapeworms (Echinococcus granulosus) in dogs. For the treatment of hookworm, roundworms and tapeworms in kittens, NexGard® COMBO should be administered once as a single dose. Monthly use of NexGard® COMBO will control any subsequent infestations with hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms. The treatment of adult worms can be exposed to and can become infected with hookworms, roundworms, and tapeworms throughout the year, regardless of season or climate.

Contraindications: There are no known contraindications for the use of NexGard® COMBO.

Human Warnings: Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of sight and reach of children. Do not use without medical advice.

NexGard® is a registered trademark and NexGard COMBO™ is a trademark of Elanco Animal Health, Inc.
Characterizing Abnormal Neural Networks in Dogs with Anxiety

In a study published in the journal *PLOS One*, researchers at Ghent University in Belgium report abnormalities in functional neural networks of dogs diagnosed with anxiety. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans, they found that anxious dogs had stronger connections between the amygdala and other regions of the anxiety network than healthy dogs did.

Twenty-five healthy and 13 anxious dogs were volunteered by their owners. The researchers examined the resting state of healthy and anxious dogs via noninvasive fMRI. Dogs that exhibited fear and anxiety toward strangers, as well as excitability, were more likely to have brains showing abnormal network metrics in the amygdala.

The study authors commented, “We constructed functional brain networks using graph theory metrics to compare the differences between anxious and healthy dog groups. Our findings could provide more insight into the topological organization of the functional brain connectome in anxiety disorder...in both animals and humans and help the development of more personalized and effective therapies.”

CDC Warns of Emerging Threat of Cat-Transmitted Sporotrichosis

In a recent teleconference, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned about an emerging epidemic of cat-transmitted sporotrichosis (CTS), a major public health threat in Brazil and in other parts of South America.

The CDC describes the most concerning CTS as an infection from the fungus *Sporothrix brasiliensis* that can affect humans, cats, and other mammals. CTS from *Sporothrix brasiliensis* typically causes skin lesions, but it can also spread into the nasal mucosa and lymph nodes and even cause disseminated infections that involve the bones, lungs, or central nervous system.

People can get CTS from an infected cat through a bite or scratch, after direct contact with fluids, or from inhaling the fungus, typically after a cat with obvious sores on its face shakes its head.

A 2023 study published in the journal *Medical Mycology Case Reports* describes the first three cases of CTS outside South America and the first ever cases of CTS in the United Kingdom. Those three cases were “likely acquired from an indoor domestic cat which had previously lived in South-Eastern Brazil [for] three years.” The authors conclude, “this suggests that [CTS] can lay dormant for many years and has implications for global public health.”

In the fungal diseases section of the CDC website, a one-page fact sheet for veterinarians, “Emerging Transmissible Sporotrichosis in Cats Caused by *Sporothrix brasiliensis*,” describes recognizing and treating the disease and advises, “Given the travel and exposure patterns of humans and cats, US physicians and veterinarians need to be prepared to recognize and treat infections caused by *S. brasiliensis*.”
Despite Rising Popularity, Brachycephalic Breeds at Greater Risk for Disease

Pet insurance giant Nationwide’s veterinary analytics team recently released a two-part white paper on disease risks in brachycephalic dog breeds. The paper, titled “In the know about noses: Burrowing into brachycephalic dog breeds,” examined data from 50,000 brachycephalic dogs to see if they were at greater risk for certain diseases than nonbrachycephalic dogs.

Not surprisingly, the analysis showed that these dogs are indeed at greater risk for conditions such as respiratory disease, esophageal disease, and ocular disease, to name a few.

In addition, “extreme brachycephalic breeds,” which include English bulldogs, pugs, and French bulldogs, face far greater risk of these diseases than regular brachycephalic dog breeds. And, extreme brachycephalic dogs who have brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS), are at even greater risk. According to Nationwide’s pet insurance claims, extreme brachycephalic dogs with BOAS showed a dramatic increase in the risk of certain respiratory, gastrointestinal, and spinal disease comorbidities.

The analysis comes on the heels of increased popularity of brachycephalic breeds among pet owners. According to the American Kennel Club, the French bulldog has now supplanted the Labrador retriever as the most popular breed in the United States.

The white paper can be viewed online at petinsurance.com/veterinarians/research.

3D Prep Aids Dog’s Complicated Liver Repair Surgery

Olivia M. Hall recently reported the following news from Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. When Sarah Kopa, DVM ’23, adopted Kate, an eight-month-old black Labrador retriever puppy, she noticed that Kate lacked energy and tired easily. Kate had been diagnosed not long before with a single, large-diameter, intrahepatic portosystemic liver shunt. By the time Kate was adopted, her condition was well managed, but Kopa, a student at Cornell’s College of Veterinary Medicine, was concerned.

At the Cornell University Hospital for Animals, Nicole Buote, DVM, DACVS, associate professor in the Section of Small Animal Surgery, described a minimally invasive procedure to help Kate. She would perform the coil embolization with a catheter inserted in a neck vessel.

That procedure revealed a problem. “Kate...had a complicated shunt with a very tight turn,” Buote said. “It traveled right under one of the great vessels in the abdomen, the caudal vena cava.” She decided to try again, this time after input from computed tomography scans was processed by computers and turned into two different 3D prints. “3D printing helped us really see the anatomy we had to deal with,” Buote said.

In the second procedure, the surgical team addressed Kate’s shunt by placing a catheter in a blood vessel in the neck and inserting flexible wires into the abnormal vessel and the caudal vena cava under X-ray guidance. The surgeons placed a metallic stent into the caudal vena cava and positioned special coils into the shunt, creating a blood clot and closing off the shunt to improve blood flow to the liver. “The placement went smoothly once we had the right plan, positioning, and equipment,” Buote said.

Kate has recovered well, with normalized liver values and fewer medications.

“It’s so grateful for everything Kate’s whole team did to take care of her and get us to this point,” said Kopa.
TAMU Teams with CDC for Companion Animal COVID-19 Surveillance Study
Nine Texas A&M University researchers contributed to the COVID-19 companion animal surveillance study led by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The study is the first to summarize nationally compiled surveillance data on the epidemiologic and clinical characteristics of natural COVID-19 infection in companion animals.

Texas data, collected by Texas A&M researchers, contributed the greatest number of animal cases reported by any state. The Texas A&M COVID-19 & Pets Project, which began in the summer of 2020, was partially funded by the CDC and proved instrumental in providing the Texas data.

“The COVID-19 & Pets Project...included active household pet sampling for two years,” explained Sarah Hamer, MS, PhD, DVM, DACVPM (Epidemiology), a veterinary epidemiologist at the Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences.

Two other faculty members helped to guide the research: Rebecca Fischer, PhD, MPH, DTMH, from the School of Public Health, and Gabriel Hamer, MS, PhD, from Texas A&M’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Dogs and cats can and have become infected from their owners throughout the pandemic but often experience mild, self-limiting illness with no strong evidence of onward transmission.

“We’ve detected more than 100 cases in cats and dogs in Texas,” said Hamer. “This high level...is simply a result of our active efforts to test companion animals living in households with confirmed cases of COVID-19—often only a day or two after their owner tested positive—early and well into the pandemic.”

The study concluded that animals whose samples test positive for infection with SARS-CoV-2 are commonly exposed to people who have tested positive for the virus.

Hamer pointed out, “[Dogs and cats] are the animals that people have closest relationships with. Many pathogens—SARS-CoV-2 included—require close contact for transmission to occur, so living with our pets, and sharing our bedrooms and beds with them...can provide opportunities for transmission.”

The study also stated that more data is needed to determine the likelihood and frequency of pet-to-pet or pet-to-person transmission within households.

FDA Approves First Generic Cyclosporine Oral Solution for Treating Allergic Dermatitis in Cats
The US Food and Drug Administration has approved the first generic cyclosporine oral solution for cats. Modulis for Cats is indicated for the control of certain skin conditions resulting from feline allergic dermatitis.

Cats with feline allergic dermatitis may intensely lick, chew, and scratch at their itchy skin and hair. As a result, affected cats can develop excoriations, miliary dermatitis, eosinophilic plaques, and self-induced alopecia.

Modulis for Cats is an immunosuppressant drug containing the same active ingredient (cyclosporine) in the same concentration and dosage form as the approved brand name drug product, Atopica for Cats, which was first approved on August 8, 2011.

Cats prescribed Modulis for Cats should be at least six months old and weigh at least three pounds. It is only available by prescription from a licensed veterinarian.

People handling, administering, or exposed to Modulis for Cats should take precautions to avoid accidentally ingesting the drug. Users should also wash hands after administering Modulis for Cats. People with known hypersensitivity to cyclosporine should avoid contact with the product.
UC Davis Study of Symblepharon in Kittens Breaks New Ground

The UC Davis veterinary hospital recently treated Gratitude, a seven-month-old rescue kitten with symblepharon in her left eye, Rob Warren reported in UC Davis Vet Med news. This blinding condition occurs soon after birth when the conjunctiva—the pink tissue surrounding the eye—fuses with other nearby surface structures of the eye or eyelid. It is likely secondary to a feline herpesvirus infection on the ocular surface. Symblepharon’s outcomes are scantily documented in academic veterinary literature. In 20 years, only five published articles have described symblepharon research, covering just 20 kittens.

To help better describe the disease and its potential treatments, UC Davis veterinary scientists recently reported on 40 kittens with symblepharon seen at UC Davis over two decades. Published in the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery, this study doubles the number of kittens ever described with the condition.

“There is a misconception that this disease is not treatable or that it has a high rate of recurrence,” said David Maggs, BVSc (Hons), DACVO, a professor of ophthalmology at UC Davis. “We were able to...determine that this is not one homogeneous disease. Many of these cases were previously being referred for enucleation (removal of eye), but we discovered that almost all these kittens have...eyes that can be saved.”

The researchers classified five types of symblepharon. “By carefully identifying which type of symblepharon a kitten may have, the surgery to correct two of the types could be performed by a general practitioner,” said Karen Vernau, DVM, DACVIM, a clinical professor of neurology/neurosurgery. “This could allow shelter veterinarians to correct the condition at the time of neutering.”

Taking the lead on the research paper was UC Davis undergraduate student Hikaru (Ray) Shiraishi, who has developed a strong interest in veterinary ophthalmology and is currently taking on another research project related to kitten eyes.

As well as her eye treatment, Gratitude also had a diaphragmatic hernia corrected by the soft tissue surgery service and recovered in the intensive care unit. After making a full recovery, Gratitude was adopted by a UC Davis staff member.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“We should indeed keep calm in the face of difference, and live our lives in a state of inclusion and wonder at the diversity of humanity.”

—George Takei
**NAVTA and Virox Technologies Launch New Program to Create Infection Prevention Leaders**

Hospital-associated infections (HAIs) in veterinary medicine affect patients, clients, and staff with damaging health, economic, and social consequences. According to an article on HAIs published in *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, it is estimated that 10–70% of HAIs can be prevented with the help of better infection prevention practices resulting in safer workplaces.

To advance infection prevention best practices, the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), in partnership with Virox Technologies, has launched the Infection Prevention Leader Certificate Program. This online program is designed to provide animal care professionals with the knowledge needed to reduce the risk of spreading infection and create a safer workplace for their team, patients, and clients. The certificate program consists of four complimentary RACE-approved courses, which include:

- Infectious Disease Control: Pathogens & Disease Transmission
- Infectious Disease Control: Infection Prevention
- Infectious Disease Control: Cleaning, Disinfection & Sterilization
- Infectious Disease Control: Implementation & Communication

Upon completion of the four courses, students will receive a certificate as well as five continuing education credits.

Enrollment in the program is complimentary to all animal care professionals.

“In partnering with Virox, NAVTA intends that this certificate course gives veterinary team members a better understanding of HAIs and their prevention” said Jamie Rauscher, LVT, president of NAVTA. “In addition, the opportunity to make the course free to all team members is something that we readily agreed to [in order to] make it more accessible to everyone.”

“Veterinary professionals are on the frontlines fighting diseases on a daily basis. Arming them with infection prevention best practices is now more important than ever,” commented founder and CEO of Virox Technologies, Randy Pilon. “As a leader in setting new standards in disinfection and infection prevention, Virox Technologies is proud to work with NAVTA on this exciting new program.”

For more information on the program, search “Infection Prevention Program” on NAVTA’s website.

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**New Research Shows Environmental Impact of Small Animal Parasiticides**

The Grantham Institute at Imperial College London recently published a briefing note, “Are urban areas hotspots for pollution from pet parasiticides?” The authors report that chemicals from small animal parasiticide products have been found in urban waterways in the UK, in concentrations high enough to cause environmental harm.

In light of these findings, the British Veterinary Association (BVA) is calling for more research into the impact of parasiticides on the environment and is encouraging its members to use these medicines responsibly.

“Parasiticide treatments do an important job in preventing, treating, and protecting both animals and humans from illnesses and conditions linked to parasites,” said BVA’s Senior Vice President Justine Shotton, BVSc. “There are still many knowledge gaps surrounding parasiticide products, so this research—although shocking—by the Imperial College is welcome.”
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* See terms for details
4 ways your clinic can benefit from payment technology:

Offer mobile-friendly online payments
Since today’s care can take place in clinic or virtually, having an online payment link equips clinics with multiple contactless payment options.

Place clients’ preferred card on file
Secure, convenient card-on-file payment technology gives clinics peace of mind, gets them paid faster, and reduces or eliminates check-out time.

Search transaction records digitally for fast refunds
Clinics still relying on paper receipts and labor-intensive filing systems to track payments will find that an automated, digital system saves time and hassle.

Leverage flexible payment plans and financing
Offering payment plans and financing solutions helps clients afford the care their pets need and is a positive outcome for the clinic, the pet, and the owner.
Rethinking Recruitment
Switch Up Your Strategies to Be More Inclusive

by Melody Martínez, CVT
THE BOND BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS is a cross-cultural phenomenon. According to survey data from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Americans of all races and ethnicities welcome dogs and cats into their homes at similar rates and are just as likely to view them as family members, not mere property.

Yet when a client walks into a veterinary clinic, they are very likely to be greeted by a largely white staff: nearly 88% of veterinarians are white (whereas only 62% of the general population is white), and all other races and ethnicities are underrepresented in the industry. There are a few more technicians and assistants who are people of color, but the overall figures are still wildly out of step compared with the overall demographics of the United States.

Many factors have contributed to this outcome, including policies that date back to the institution of slavery, veterinary school admissions practices, the unaffordability of a formal education, and the unprofitable reality of a veterinary technician career. These are deeply rooted systemic issues that won’t change overnight or without our collective determination, but that shouldn’t stop us from making the changes we can where we wield influence to do so. Could changes to our hiring practices help drive a shift toward an industry that better represents society as a whole?

The answer is yes—in fact, many veterinary practices are already making big strides.
The Ongoing Staffing Crisis
The veterinary profession has been experiencing a crisis in staffing and retention for the better part of a decade now, and it only seems to be getting worse. Educational debt has increased while wages have stagnated, mental health and wellbeing were pushed even further onto the back-burner during the pandemic, and the need for veterinary care has far exceeded the available qualified staff to keep up.

While it’s true that we are having trouble attracting new veterinarians, technicians, and assistants, we need to admit that the conditions in our industry are also pushing people to leave—whether it’s for other clinics, nonclinical settings, relief or private consulting, or the profession altogether for a new career.

It’s a job-seekers’ market, so we need to work even harder to make a career in veterinary medicine appealing to as many people as possible. Attracting and retaining dedicated professionals will require that we take proactive steps to build workplace cultures that are welcoming to people of all cultures, races, and genders, being especially attentive to creating an environment that supports individuals who have largely been underrepresented.

Good Intentions Are Not Enough
In a recent study from the University of Pennsylvania, researchers found that even firms with stated intentions to hire more diverse candidates consistently failed to do so.

“Ultimately, our research allows a peek under the hood of big prestigious firms, where we found a surprising amount of race and gender bias given that these firms claim to be seeking diversity,” Judd Kessler and Corinne Low wrote in the Harvard Business Review. “To answer the call of the current moment, firms need to take a hard look at their hiring processes and face up the fact that they may not be as diversity-loving in practice as they are in intention.”

So while intentions are appreciated, workplaces need to take deliberate steps in order to ensure those intentions translate into results.

Assessing Workplace Values and Culture
Making change starts by assessing where you are. This can be the most challenging part, since it can often require admitting that your culture is much farther from your values than you had imagined. Many companies choose to enlist the help of a consultant to perform an assessment of their values, culture, and workplace practices, but there are some steps you can take before getting outside support.

Start by asking yourself some tough questions:
- Does your clinic or organization provide the psychological safety necessary for people with marginalized identities to work there? Harvard professor Amy Edmondson has researched the concept extensively and defines psychological safety as “a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes.”
- When faced with conflict that includes racialized or gendered components, do you have a process that ensures the party with a marginalized identity is heard? What unique support do you offer them?
- Can prospective job applicants see themselves already in your staff, in your clientele, in your marketing, and—most importantly—in your demonstrated values?
- How are you already in relationship with or demonstrating accountability to the communities
Making change starts by assessing where you are. This can be the most challenging part, since it can often require admitting that your culture is much farther from your values than you had imagined.

you seek to recruit individuals from? If you are not, what might you need to do to shift this?

- Are you being publicly honest about where you are in your understanding of issues that marginalized people face and the steps you’re taking to create a more inclusive and accountable work environment?

As you answer these questions, keep in mind that the goal is for potential candidates to be confident before applying that they would be able to show up to the workplace as their whole selves. They should be able to feel a sense of belonging and that they would contribute to the existing culture in a way that wouldn’t deplete them or cause undue or disparate burden. Perfection is not the goal; what matters is being able to demonstrate your awareness, actions, and accountability toward creating an inclusive work environment.

**Developing an Appealing Benefits Package**

Everyone likes to feel appreciated at work, and for prospective employees, a strong benefits package can act as an early signal that your clinic values its staff. While benefits are applied equally to all full-time employees, some benefits can be more meaningful to people with marginalized identities. For example:

- Offer flexible scheduling, which while it tends to benefit parents most is also helpful for people who act as part-time caregivers for elders in their family—something that is far more common in communities of color.
- Ensure that your health insurance provider supports gender-affirming healthcare.
- Create a policy for student loan payment assistance or support for veterinary technician education and credentialing. On average, professionals of color carry more educational debt than their white counterparts, so while these policies will benefit everyone, they will make your clinic more appealing to candidates of color.
- Offer a pay differential for employees who speak languages relevant to your clientele.
- Offer a pay differential for employees who have demonstrated experience and interest in supporting your clinic’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) work.
- Encourage existing employees to create employee
resource and affinity groups, and ensure that any groups that form are offered a budget for their activities. These groups can create a welcoming space for relationship building and idea generation and give a voice to staff, so long as their proposals are considered and potentially implemented.

Not every practice will be able to afford every possible benefit. The goal should be to first consider what’s financially and logistically possible, and then get creative coming up with your own ideas that support the equity and inclusion efforts of your unique practice.

Crafting an Inclusive Job Listing
We know it’s important to accurately describe the job requirements and expectations. After all, first and foremost, employees need to be able to do their job well. But when looking to attract candidates from marginalized communities, it’s equally important to communicate your values and any unique benefits your clinic offers to employees.

Your job listing is the first thing a prospective candidate will see, so what you share (or don’t share) will leave an impression that either passionately encourages or discourages a potential applicant.

Here are some of the job listing strategies that might help your practice stand out to these applicants and demonstrate your commitment to inclusion and accessibility:

- Communicate your values, goals, and reasons for investing in DEIB, and be up-front about where you are along the path to a more just and inclusive workplace. This must go beyond the boilerplate “equal opportunity employer” language or verbiage that communicates a simple tolerance for diversity. Additionally, consider including explicit language to encourage applicants currently underrepresented on your staff to apply.
- Be transparent about the salary (or salary range) for the position. This is already required in some states, but in states where it is not, it demonstrates that the employer is ahead of the curve and looking to decrease persistent gender and racial pay gaps.
- Describe your hiring process so that applicants know what to expect and when, decreasing anxiety around the process.
- Remove unnecessary qualifications, including educational degrees if they are not absolutely necessary for the role. There’s data that supports this shift: women and people of color are less likely to apply to a job if they do not meet 100% of the qualifications listed. Consider differentiating what skills, experiences, and attributes are absolutely necessary and those that are simply “nice to have.” Additionally, if you’re recruiting assistants (often the gateway role to the profession for people of color and people from lower-income households), be explicit about what you’re willing to train, what mentorship opportunities you offer, and how you will support their career ambitions.
- Expand on what you consider relevant experience. Many companies tend to overemphasize formal work experience or formal education as the only avenue for obtaining the skills or traits necessary to perform a job. While formal education or formal work experience is necessary for certain roles (e.g., veterinarians and technicians), imposter syndrome is very real. It’s important to consider how else someone might have obtained the skills or attributes necessary for a specific task or role and then explicitly encourage applicants to highlight their combination of life experience, volunteer experience, education, and work experience.
- Highlight the unique workplace benefits that speak to the audience you’re recruiting.

Rethinking Your Recruitment Strategies
Clinics often post on the same job boards and websites every time they’re looking to hire. While these platforms are often the easiest way to find candidates, if they haven’t helped you recruit a diverse candidate pool in the past, they are unlikely to ever do so.

Your job listing is the first thing a prospective candidate will see, so what you share (or don’t share) will leave an impression that either passionately encourages or discourages a potential applicant.
So after you create that job listing, spend some extra time considering ways to reach the communities in your city or region who are underrepresented in your staff. Where are the communities you seek to hire from most likely to encounter your job listing? For entry-level positions that do not require degrees, it is especially important to post or share the position in nontraditional outlets to attract people new to the veterinary profession. Do you have clients from these communities you could speak to?

Equally important is to consider your existing networks. Do your colleagues in other cities or regions have potential contacts you could reach out to? Is there a nearby school offering the requisite degrees for the position you’re offering? Have you tried using paid advertising for the position on social media? These are only a few ideas—every city and every community are different.

**Conducting Successful Interviews**

The pressure is usually on the candidate to perform well in an interview, but when the candidate is a person of color, mistakes by the interviewer can just as easily lead to a candidate's downfall. In order to ensure people of color and gender-diverse candidates are given a fair shot at being hired, the veterinary industry needs to completely reimagine the interview process.

First and foremost, all interviews should be conducted by a panel, not by an individual. This is increasingly recommended as best practice for all industries, as it helps prevent the potential biases of one person dictating the hiring of an entire team.

Who should sit on a hiring panel? Research indicates that the most effective way to increase the odds that qualified candidates with marginalized identities are hired is to ensure the hiring panel for the position includes the diversity you’re seeking to implement.

While this is certainly intuitive, it can sometimes be hard to implement if your organization completely lacks the representation that you’re seeking to grow. In such a situation, you have a few options:

1. Hire community partners with similar DEIB values to assist in your recruitment and interview process. These could be staff at other clinics or from organizations or businesses with which you have
existing relationships. A small investment can go a long way.

2. Invest in implicit bias training for everyone involved in hiring. This won’t stop bias from occurring, but it helps people be aware of how their biases may come up, be more likely to notice them when they do occur, have an opportunity to remember why they care about reducing the impact of their implicit bias, and take action to work against it in the moment.

During the interview, it is always important to be up-front about your commitment to DEIB. Share with the candidates how you demonstrate your commitment in practice, but also share your vision for the future. If a candidate expresses discomfort about your goals, then it’s likely they are not a good fit for your team—regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender.

An interview is also a great opportunity to ensure you ask (1) the correct pronunciation of the applicant’s name and (2) the applicant’s pronouns.

Smooth Onboarding Is Key
Most people decide in their first days and weeks on the job if they’re likely to stay for a long period of time, so it is absolutely pivotal to ensure new employees feel welcome, wanted, and listened to. This can look different for different people—hopefuly you learned about them in the interview process!—but here are some ideas:

- Does your new employee have a name that some team members might find difficult to pronounce? You likely already know this from the interview, so now it’s time to work with staff ahead of their first day to ensure everyone gets it right. Mistakes will occur and your staff should know to expect to be corrected. You can also tell the new hire that they are welcome to point this out to staff and staff will put in the work to say it correctly.
- Similarly, take steps to encourage staff to use the new employee’s accurate pronouns. In fact, why not add pronouns to everyone’s name tags?
- Does your clinic only have gendered bathrooms? At minimum, ensure that you have one all-gender bathroom available.
- Don’t wait for your new staff member to be the first to ask about your clinic’s DEIB efforts or available affinity groups, but be mindful not to make this the primary focus of conversation. You don’t want that new staff member to think they were hired just to do DEIB work. They are, after all, also a person with experience, education, and interest in veterinary medicine.
- People feel like they belong when they are seen and when they feel connected and supported. Feeling included and like you belong has a lot to do with how much influence you wield. How are you included in decisions in your workplace? Are your ideas and suggestions not merely heard but seriously considered and acted on? Employees who can answer yes to these questions tend to have a higher sense of ownership of their workplaces—a condition for belonging—and they tend to be proud of their workplaces, another condition for belonging and for retention. This can be particularly powerful for people with marginalized identities, who often report feeling powerless in the workplace.

Track Your Hiring Outcomes
We started this process with an assessment, but it’s important to continue to evaluate your progress and
setbacks as you move forward. If you acknowledge that the process is not going to be perfect and commit to learning from your mistakes, you will begin to see progress.

Regular staff surveys (anonymous) and reciprocal evaluations (not anonymous) will be key to gaining a better understanding of how employees are experiencing the workplace.

Just as you regularly examine your anesthesia protocol, it’s also important to evaluate your hiring and onboarding.

If you’re not reaching the outcomes you desired, work together as a team to develop new ideas to test.

There’s no foolproof playbook for building DEIB in the workplace. It will take practice, trial and error, patience, and, most critically, the will to make these changes. Know that your commitment is shared with many others across the profession who are doing similar work and that, together, we will soon see a veterinary industry that provides safe and fulfilling jobs to a wider workforce that more closely resembles the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in society. In turn, this shift will result in improvements and innovation to our medical practice and ensure that all families and communities can access the benefits of veterinary medicine.

Melody Martínez, CVT, is president of the Multicultural Veterinary Medical Association and the first-generation daughter of Afro-Caribbean working-class immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Melody has worked in small animal general practice, in emergency and critical care, and as a senior animal caregiver at Farm Sanctuary in New York. Melody currently works as a racial equity and organizational change management consultant at Acorde Consulting.
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Your Secret Weapon for Recruiting

Use Social Media to Hire the People You Need

by Nicole Scott-Jones

THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED VETERINARY STAFF WAS A CHALLENGE BEFORE COVID-19, but the ongoing pandemic situation has only put further strain on the veterinary workforce. According to Merck's third annual Veterinary Wellbeing Study, a staggering 90% of respondents are worried about the shortage of qualified staff. But now the problem isn’t just limited to veterinary medicine, as attracting—and retaining—skilled employees is increasingly difficult for businesses across industries. The question is: How can you differentiate your practice and attract staff in a rapidly evolving workforce?

In today’s era, social media has permeated almost every area of our lives, and in recent years, the business world has certainly noticed. The data says it all: 56% of recruiters say they find the best candidates through social media, and 79% of job seekers use social media when searching for jobs. By leveraging the power of social media, you can showcase your clinic’s culture and team dynamics while also highlighting the unique aspects of each job position. In this article, we explore social media (specifically, Instagram) as a recruitment tool and show how it can help you reach a larger applicant pool of better qualified candidates, at a much lower cost.
Getting Started
Identify Team Members
Given social media’s widespread use, it’s likely that at least one of your team members has an interest in content creation. Identify those individuals, allocate time for content creation and page management, and compensate them for their time and skill. Protect their time by giving them a designated title and preventing interruptions during their work (no getting pulled into exam rooms or helping with tech appoints “really quick!”).

One Rule to Rule Them All: Know Your Audience
A rule of thumb in any area of marketing is to know your audience. What social media platforms different candidates are using in their job search will depend heavily on their age range. Understanding your social media audience can help you get job postings in front of the best potential candidates. If you are in the market for a seasoned leader, LinkedIn may produce better leads, as those with higher education tend to report regularly using LinkedIn. Instagram may be a better channel to reach a younger cohort, especially with video content.

Overall, having a presence across multiple platforms is integral to success. The content on these sites reaches everyone and provides a valuable opportunity to showcase what makes your clinic unique—to both clients and potential job seekers.

Stay in Your Lane
There is a lot of content out there today, but picking two or three content types and doing them well is the key. Some basic choices could be:
- **Spotlight:** Highlight staff members, new pets, and new team members to create a sense of community and personality.
- **Motivate:** These are shared positive stories from patient cases or personal anecdotes, whatever staff and clients are comfortable sharing.
- **Inform:** This is not as boring as it sounds, but posting important veterinary or public health-related updates establishes your clinic as an authoritative and reliable source of information. In an age where misinformation reigns, this can strengthen your clinic’s brand with clients and job seekers alike. Most importantly, you want to inform followers of job postings/availability.

**Tip:** Take advantage of marketing and awareness dates to celebrate staff and clients or educate your community on topics like Heartworm Awareness or Pet Dentistry Month. Did you provide opportunities for your staff to earn higher education? Show off their accomplishments and demonstrate that you invest in and value your staff members as instrumental parts of your team.
When planning your content, schedule posts at a frequency that does not overwhelm your social media manager.

Implement the Plan
Recurring Content
One important type of content to mention is recurring content. The significance of practice culture is becoming increasingly apparent. You can show off your clinic’s core values using recurring content by continually reintroducing who you are and what you stand for. These posts should be on the calendar every four to six weeks.

Calendar
When planning your content, schedule posts at a frequency that does not overwhelm your social media manager. To stand out among the abundance of content, prioritize quality over quantity in the content you post. Select your content types and start with one to two posts per week. This creates a consistent posting schedule without flooding your followers’ feeds with irrelevant and invaluable content. An example content calendar can be found online, such as in this blog: blog.hubspot.com/marketing/make-calendar-google-sheets.

Hashtags
Hashtags are words or numbers preceded by the pound symbol (#) to categorize content and make things searchable and more discoverable. When used correctly, hashtags can increase the visibility of your content to potential followers, but using the wrong ones can have an equal but opposite effect. There really is no exact science for hashtags since social media algorithms are always changing, but staying up to date with a stash of active hashtags will help keep your posts sorted to the top of the algorithm and in front of the people who will engage with it the most.

Here are some tips on how to choose hashtags and avoid “stale” hashtags, increasing visibility for your posts:
1. Create a list of 10 keywords relevant to your clinic—this is your hashtag bank. Examples: veterinary medicine, DVM, reptile vet, veterinary dentistry.
2. From the “search” tab on Instagram, type in your keyword and look up by “tags.”
3. Use hashtags that have 20k–500k posts—less means people aren’t looking up that tag and more means there are too many posts and yours will get lost.
4. The most recent posts with that hashtag should be from the last few minutes or last few hours.
5. Use between 11 and 30 hashtags with each post.

Measuring Success
So you’ve designated a team member to oversee your social media content, built out a basic content calendar, started collecting relevant hashtags, and started posting regularly—how do you know if any of it is working? There are a lot of different metrics for success in social media. They differ based on your objectives, but two basic recommendations for recruiting are reach and engagement.
Reach
This tells you how many users are seeing your content. The goal for a hiring manager is to get as many candidates as possible to see your job postings. Paying for postings on job boards can cost thousands of dollars. Through both organic and paid content, social media allows your job postings to reach a much larger applicant pool at a much lower cost.

Understanding your reach is one part of understanding your audience, and it is important to ensure your content is getting in front of the right people. For example, if you are a clinic based in Austin, Texas, but you are reaching a lot of users in Positano, Italy, that’s important to know. Unless you have a hefty relocation package (if you do, respect!), you will want to consider using local hashtags to target more geographically relevant applicants. You can access these metrics in your Professional Dashboard in Facebook and Instagram (Assuming you are using a business account for those platforms).

Engagement
Again, we’re living in an age with endless content. Getting your content in front of hundreds of people is not enough. In addition to understanding your reach, you need to also understand how, what, and where your followers are engaging with your content. Any interaction on your posts—liking, sharing, saving, commenting—counts as engagement.

Tip: If you are reaching many people but getting low engagement, this says your content is not resonating with your audience. Consider adjusting your message or imagery.

Insights
The Insights in the Instagram Professional Dashboard is not a comprehensive analytics dashboard, but it can serve as a basic tool to understand performance.

When clients and potential job seekers feel connected to a brand, it fosters loyalty and word-of-mouth reach, so don’t underestimate the power of following and interacting with accounts that are relevant to your content.
1. Adjust your view to the last 30 days.
2. Looking at Accounts Reached, you can see your total reach. Write that number down.
3. In this view, you can get a brief overview of valuable data like what cities, countries, age demographic, and genders you are reaching.
4. Looking at Accounts Engaged, you can see the total content interactions. Take your first number, Accounts Reached, and divide it by this number:
   \[
   \text{Total Accounts Reached} / \text{Total Content Interactions} = \text{Engagement rate.}
   \]
5. The resulting number can help you evaluate your current performance, which will allow you to set achievable goals.

**Creating Community**

When clients and potential job seekers feel connected to a brand, it fosters loyalty and word-of-mouth reach, so don’t underestimate the power of following and interacting with accounts that are relevant to your content. When first starting, make a goal to follow a certain number of similar accounts each week. Make sure your social media manager takes the time to read and engage with content from similar accounts each day. They should respond to comments on your posts and reply to any DMs as quickly as possible. Having a quick response time is favorable for the way the algorithm sorts your posts. Remember your hashtag bank? Follow accounts that are posting content with the same hashtags you are using. All these adjustments work in favor with the algorithm, so your job postings and content get in front of the best potential applicants.

**Branding 101**

If you are a practice manager, owner, or any kind of team leader and are ready to set out on your social media journey, connect with the team that built your website or did any branding. Request all the colors and fonts and compile all versions of your clinic logo into a central location.

You should also be clear and concise in your social media bios, being sure to keep the brand voice consistent throughout. Your bio should state clearly what your clinic does and what sets it apart. Developing a cohesive look and feel across all social media channels helps you create a memorable brand. And in an age with so much content, being remembered is what counts.

**Tip:** Your brand voice is the obvious and distinct personality of your business across all communications. Your brand voice enables you to connect with a specific audience and engage qualified candidates.

**Toolbox**

**Content Creation**

There is a vast array of tools to keep up with the content planning, creation, and analysis of performance. For example, graphic design is not in my wheelhouse, so Canva reigns supreme in helping me create striking graphics and short videos for all my social media needs. There are thousands of templates. Even if you don’t feel
Developing a cohesive look and feel across all social media channels helps you create a memorable brand.

like you’ve found something you love, it serves as an excellent source of inspiration. You can get Canva for free, but the paid version is worth it and can be shared between multiple users.

**Tip:** Take advantage of the Pro features in Canva like the Brand Kit. You can set templates and input brand colors, fonts, and logos to create a cohesive look across your social media channels.

Content Planning

What’s the best way to plan your content? The answer you get will depend on who you ask. Some prefer spreadsheets while others utilize programs like Asana or Trello, although those can be costly. There are lots of Google Sheets templates that can be downloaded and used as monthly calendars for content planning.

Measuring Success

Marketing teams use different software, spreadsheets, and metrics of success depending on their unique business goals. To keep it simple, get familiar with the Insights features in both Meta (Facebook) and Instagram. Get to know what age range your audience falls into, where they are located, and what they interact with most.

Given the changing workforce, it is crucial that veterinary clinics find innovative ways to recruit and retain skilled team members. By leveraging the power of social media, practice owners can showcase their unique clinical culture and available job positions, reach a larger applicant pool, in innovative ways to recruit and retain skilled team members. By leveraging what they interact with most.

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Wear eye protection when administering CLARO®. (See Human Warnings, PRECAUTIONS, POST-APPROVAL EXPERIENCE.)


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Canine hypothyroidism is commonly overdiagnosed because the signs are nonspecific, and interpreting thyroid function tests can be challenging.

Executive Summary

These guidelines were prepared by a task force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. Evidence-guided support for specific recommendations has been cited whenever possible and appropriate. Other recommendations are based on practical clinical experience and a consensus of expert opinion. Further research is needed to document some of these recommendations. Drug approvals and labeling are current at the time of writing but may change over time. Because each case is different, veterinarians must base their decisions on the best available scientific evidence in conjunction with their own knowledge and experience.

This executive summary is not a substitute for reading the guidelines in their entirety. The full guidelines are published in the Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association (J Am Anim Hosp Assoc 2023; 59:113–135. DOI 10.5326/JAAHA-MS-7368) or visit aaha.org/endocrine-disease.

Overview

These guidelines discuss four endocrinopathies that practitioners will inevitably encounter: canine hypothyroidism, canine
hypercortisolism (Cushing syndrome), canine hypoadrenocorticism (Addison’s disease), and feline hyperthyroidism (FHT). Three less common feline endocrinopathies are briefly discussed: feline hyperaldosteronism, feline hypothyroidism, and feline hyperadrenocorticism. Canine and feline diabetes mellitus are not discussed in these guidelines but are addressed in the 2018 AAHA Diabetes Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats.

The clinical signs of endocrinopathies are typically nonspecific and highly variable; in some cases, they can be iatrogenic. Early-stage disease can be subclinical. Complicating factors are possible comorbidities, some of which can be secondary to advancing age. Early intervention avoids the severe syndromes that can impact quality of life and cause secondary organ damage and mortality.

Diagnosis involves recognizing clinical signs or physical examination abnormalities, compiling the patient’s history, interpreting hormone concentration assays, and excluding comorbidities. Monitoring and treatment involves noting the presence or resolution of clinical signs, trends in endogenous hormone levels, and therapeutic dose adjustments.

It is important to engage the owner in managing the pet’s health. Dialogue with the client should involve the entire practice team. Accordingly, these guidelines include a section on practice team and client considerations to promote better adherence to treatment recommendations and improved outcomes.

How the Guidelines Are Organized
The guidelines provide a practical, stepwise approach to diagnosis and treatment. Each endocrinopathy is introduced with a definition and clinical profile. The discussion of each endocrinopathy uses an innovative, categorical approach to diagnosis based on clinical presentation and medical history, previously described in the 2016 AAFP Guidelines for the Management of Feline Hyperthyroidism. The clinical presentation of each disease is summarized in a table, which also includes the next steps for diagnosis and treatment. Accompanying each table is a more detailed narrative specific to each disease. The table is a prescriptive, quick-reference tool, whereas the narrative provides contextual background for making clinical decisions.

A decision tree for feline hypothyroidism depicts options for diagnosis and treatment.

This executive summary highlights the guidelines’ categorical approach to endocrinopathies. To use it properly, practitioners must read the guidelines in their entirety. In addition, practitioners will benefit from consulting the abundant literature to gain additional clinical perspectives on each disease.

Canine Hypothyroidism
Hypothyroidism is one of the most common endocrinopathies of the dog, and a clear-cut diagnosis can be made when the signalment and presentation of symptoms are classic and are supported by appropriate test results. However, hypothyroidism is commonly overdiagnosed because of the nonspecific nature of the signs and the challenges of interpreting thyroid function tests.

The guidelines identify three categories of canine hypothyroidism:

Group 1: Dogs with classic signs of hypothyroidism and a low total thyroxine concentration (TT4). Signalment includes middle-aged dogs and breed predisposition, including beagles, golden retrievers, Doberman pinschers, and Great Danes.

Group 2: Dogs with no clinical signs of hypothyroidism and a low TT4.

It is critical to consider the dog’s

Feline hyperthyroidism is extremely common and, if untreated, is fatal. Radioactive iodine provides a cure in more than 95% of cases.
Low-stress visits encourage reliable diagnostic results because stress can influence many endocrine-related diagnostics.

signalment, such as age and breed, before proceeding with additional testing for hypothyroidism. The guidelines task force recommends using breed-specific reference ranges when interpreting hormone levels in predisposed breeds, especially if no clinical signs are present.

Group 3: Dogs with clinical signs of hypothyroidism and a normal TT4. These dogs have a similar clinical presentation to Group 1 dogs, but the TT4 does not confirm hypothyroidism. The guidelines advise investigating other causes by reviewing the patient’s medical history with the client and pursuing additional diagnostics.

Table 1 summarizes the clinical presentation and next steps for each group.

Canine Hypercortisolism (Cushing Syndrome)
The guidelines discuss naturally occurring adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH)–dependent Cushing syndrome (CS) and ACTH-independent CS. They do not discuss ectopic ACTH secretion and food-dependent hypercortisolism.

All diagnostic tests for CS have limitations and can yield false-positive results in patients with concurrent nonadrenal illness or stress. Practitioners should test only those patients who present two or more clinical or biochemical abnormalities that suggest CS. There are many published monitoring and testing protocols; there is no universal consensus on one protocol. Measurement of cortisol concentrations (before pill or following ACTH stimulation technique, or ACTHST) is recommended to help determine whether to adjust the dose. Because CS is a highly variable disease, clinician judgment and discretion are important in determining the monitoring protocol.

Table 2 lists clinicopathologic findings that can occur with CS, and Table 3 lists clinical signs associated with naturally occurring CS.

The guidelines identify four categories of canine hypercortisolism (CS):

Group 1: Dogs with clinical signs and clinicopathologic findings consistent with CS (Tables 2 and 3). Specific endocrine testing should be performed. The guidelines panel recommends a low-dose dexamethasone suppression test (LDDST) as a routine first step.

Group 2: Dogs with no clinical signs but with clinicopathologic abnormalities suggestive of CS (Table 2). Probe the patient’s history with specific questions about water intake, urination habits, worsened incontinence, or nocturia. Also rule out glucocorticoids, including ophthalmic or otic preparations. Specific endocrine testing is not necessary unless or until clinical signs of CS are present.

Group 3: Dogs with clinical signs suggestive of CS (Table 3) without clinicopathologic abnormalities. Question the owner to rule out administration of glucocorticoids that could cause CS.

Group 4: Sick patients presenting with signs and/or clinicopathologic findings consistent with CS. Presenting signs must be addressed before pursuing diagnostics. Hypercortisolism does not cause anorexia, vomiting, or diarrhea. Presenting signs may be due to a disease process unrelated to CS or a comorbidity associated with CS.

Table 4 summarizes the clinical presentation and next steps for each category of dog.

Canine Hypoadrenocorticism (Addison’s Disease)
Addison’s disease describes a spectrum of conditions resulting in deficiencies of important adrenal hormones (i.e., cortisol and aldosterone). The clinical signs can occur in dogs of any age or breed. Most, however, are diagnosed in middle age, with a female predisposition inconsistently reported. Commonly affected breeds are listed.
The patient history is essential to case management. The guidelines offer advice for taking a quality patient history.

Table 5 lists diseases with a clinical presentation similar to HA, Table 6 lists conditions that biochemically resemble hypoadrenocorticism (pseudo-Addisonian conditions), and Table 7 lists laboratory changes that can occur with hypoadrenocorticism.

The guidelines identify four categories of canine hypoadrenocorticism:

**Group 1:** Dogs with classic clinical disease. Patients present with chronic or episodic clinical signs and laboratory abnormalities consistent with hypoadrenocorticism. Options for diagnostic testing depend on whether suspicion of disease is high or low and whether resting cortisol is greater or less than 0.2 mcg/dL.

**Group 2:** Dogs with no clinical signs but with classic laboratory abnormalities, including hyperkalemia and/or hyponatremia. Additional laboratory abnormalities may be present (Table 7). If deeper analysis reveals no clinical signs, other causes of laboratory changes, such as spurious causes (Table 6), should be ruled out.

**Group 3:** Addisonian crisis. Group 3 dogs present in hypovolemic shock with or without historic episodic signs consistent with hypoadrenocorticism. This is the most serious and life-threatening manifestation of hypoadrenocorticism and typically presents as hypovolemic shock accompanied by severe hyperkalemia and hyponatremia. Other laboratory abnormalities may also be present (Table 7). Next steps for immediate and follow-up treatment are provided.

**Group 4:** Dogs with clinical signs with nonspecific laboratory abnormalities (atypical presentation). These dogs present with chronic or episodic clinical signs without the characteristic findings associated with classic hypoadrenocorticism. Because signs of canine hypoadrenocorticism can mimic many other diseases, patients may present with episodic clinical signs that could be consistent with Addison’s disease without the hallmarks of hyperkalemia or hyponatremia (Table 6).

Table 8 summarizes the categorical approach to diagnosing suspected canine hypoadrenocorticism.

The guidelines note that clients can learn to administer subcutaneous injections. Once the dose and dosing interval are established, someone other than the veterinarian may administer desoxycorticosterone pivalate (DOCP) injections.

**Feline Hyperthyroidism**

The management of feline hyperthyroidism (FHT) has been covered extensively in other publications, notably the 2016 AAFP Guidelines for the Management of Feline Hyperthyroidism. Much of the information in those guidelines remains applicable. This discussion highlights certain key points from the AAFP Guidelines and presents recent findings.

FHT is an extremely common endocrinopathy in cats and, left untreated, will eventually be fatal. The treatment of choice is radioactive iodine (¹³¹I), which will provide a cure in more than 95% of cases.

The AAFP Guidelines identify six categories of cats with FHT:

**Group 1:** Classic clinical disease. This includes cats with one or more clinical signs consistent with FHT that have an elevated T4 and no identifiable concurrent disease. The AAFP Guidelines recommend that reference laboratory testing be used for diagnosis and monitoring of FHT so that precise serum hormone levels can be followed throughout treatment and to avoid quality control discrepancies.
**Group 2:** Possible FHT with probable nonthyroidal disease. Cats in this category have clinical signs suggestive of FHT along with T4 within the laboratory reference interval.

Certain classic signs of hyperthyroidism (e.g., polydipsia, polyuria, and weight loss in the face of a good appetite) have similarities with the following morbidities that are plausible differential diagnoses: diabetes mellitus; gastrointestinal malabsorption and maldigestion; and gastrointestinal neoplasia, especially lymphosarcoma.

**Group 3:** Enlarged thyroid gland without clinical FHT. These are cats without clinical FHT, T4 within the reference interval, but with enlarged thyroid gland(s). Monitor clinical signs in these cats and repeat a serum T4 assay in six months.

**Group 4:** Subclinical FHT. Cats without overt clinical hyperthyroidism but with an elevated T4 and with some physical examination findings suggestive of hyperthyroidism. Repeat the T4 test in one to two weeks. If serum T4 is still elevated, treat the cat for FHT. While no data exists for the best way to manage Group 4 cats, the consensus of the AAFP Guidelines panel is to treat these cats for hyperthyroidism.

**Group 5:** Clinical FHT and with confirmed nonthyroidal disease. Cats with clinical hyperthyroidism confirmed by elevated T4, and one or more concurrent diseases. Hyperthyroid cats are commonly middle-aged or older and often have concurrent diseases. Because FHT is a serious disease that can result in rapid deterioration, the AAFP Guidelines panel recommends the treatment of all diagnosed cats, including animals with comorbidities. Common comorbidities associated with FHT are listed in the guidelines.

**Group 6:** Clinically normal cats. These cats have no clinical signs of hyperthyroidism and no palpable thyroid nodule but have an elevated T4 on screening laboratory test. Because falsely elevated T4 values may occur, repeat the T4 test preferably using radioimmunoassay or chemiluminescent enzyme assay. If the T4 is elevated, treat for FHT.

**Important Note**

The AAHA Guidelines task force recommends that for AAFP Guidelines Groups 4 and 6, the practitioner should consider checking TSH before 131I treatment and postponing if measurable (>0.03 ng/mL) to help avoid creating iatrogenic hypothyroidism.

Table 9 summarizes the clinical presentation and next steps for the six categories of FHT. This table is reprinted with permission from the 2016 AAFP Guidelines for the Management of Feline Hyperthyroidism.

### Less Common Feline Endocrinopathies

Three feline endocrinopathies that are encountered less often than FHT are feline hyperaldosteronism, feline hypothyroidism, and feline hyperadrenocorticism. The guidelines provide general overviews of these important diseases, including some clinical tips.

In addition to the narrative discussion, Table 11 lists key factors in managing feline primary hyperaldosteronism, and Table 1 lists clinical signs of feline hypothyroidism, both congenital and iatrogenic or adult-onset disease. Figure 1 is a decision tree that helps practitioners progress through diagnosis and treatment of feline hypothyroidism.

**Team Approach**

From initial patient presentation to long-term management, the pet owner interacts with every veterinary healthcare team member. Developing communication resources and telephone triage skills will help nonclinical staff determine appropriate scheduling for ill patients and those requiring ongoing monitoring with timed testing or even potentially life-threatening situations. Because the patient history plays an essential role in case management, the guidelines discuss how to take a quality patient history, including several specific and helpful tips.

Low-stress visits reinforce pet owner compliance for timely follow-up and encourage more reliable diagnostic results because stress can influence many endocrine-related diagnostics.

Client communication is important for the successful management of these diseases. The client should have a basic understanding of the disease, the clinical signs, adverse events, long-term goals, and recommendations regarding treatment and ongoing care. 🌟
Guidelines at a Glance

Endocrine disease is common in dogs and cats, and the veterinary team must be equipped to not only diagnose and treat these diseases, but also communicate with clients about expectations, prognosis, and course of treatment for illnesses that often require lifelong management. Because of this, diagnosis and treatment of endocrine diseases can present unique challenges.


What Diseases Are Covered?

For dogs, the guidelines provide evidence-directed diagnosis and treatment plans for these common diseases:

- Hypothyroidism
- Hypercortisolism (Cushing’s syndrome)
- Hypoadrenocorticism (Addison’s disease)

For cats, in addition to hyperthyroidism, one of the most common feline endocrine diseases, some less common endocrinopathies are also covered:

- Hyperaldosteronism
- Hypothyroidism
- Hypercortisolism

A Team-Based Approach:

Become an advocate for your endocrine patients by taking a team approach that involves the client and the entire veterinary team. Let clients know your team is here to support them and their pets with these tips from the guidelines:

- Employ low-stress handling strategies for veterinary visits
- Encourage the use of questionnaires for initial visits and follow-ups
- Develop telephone triage skills and resources for client service representatives to schedule appointments for ill patients and those who require monitoring
- Give clients time to process information and let them gather their thoughts

3/2/1

Takeaways

- Certain breeds and active working dogs may have low thyroid hormone concentrations without having thyroid disease—consider these factors before making a diagnosis
- A follow-up questionnaire can help with ongoing monitoring and medication dosage adjustments (see aaha.org/endocrine-disease under Resources for an example)
- For cats with hyperthyroidism, a physical exam and minimum database should be performed at least every 6 months, or more frequently if there are significant comorbidities

Actions

- Don’t forget to evaluate for concurrent diseases
- Empowering veterinary technicians to educate clients about signs of illness, medications, side effects, and follow-up monitoring can streamline appointments

1 Thing to Never Forget

- Routine biannual health visits should still be part of the health plan!

Learn how to become an advocate for your endocrine patients at:

aaha.org/endocrine-disease.
Early-career veterinary professionals have almost unlimited job options these days—but they still need to learn, and they're looking for workplaces that want to help them grow.

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The 2023 AAHA Mentoring Guidelines are generously supported by Merck.
Authentic Leadership: What It Is and Why You Need It

by M. Carolyn Miller

In 2007, Harvard University conducted a study to understand the behaviors that could be developed to foster an authentic leadership style. The study concluded that, by its very nature, “authentic leadership” was difficult to define, much less teach. Indeed, it grew out of one’s personal history and life experiences and was, well, authentic to that individual leader.

The very nature of authentic leadership means it’s available to everyone, regardless of where your job sits in the clinic hierarchy or who you lead (even if it’s only yourself). In addition, you have plenty of good reasons to foster it. At a time when systems are breaking down and new ones are emerging, everyone, from the kennel staff to the practice owner, must innovate. And there’s nothing like an authentic leadership style to do just that.

The Impact of Life Experiences

At its core, authentic leadership means taking all of who you are to work. It means doing your job without comprising your values and personality. As the Harvard study learned, your values and personality are a direct result of your life experiences. This is why, for instance, growing up on a farm might predispose you to working with animals as your career and becoming a veterinarian.
But we don’t grow up in a vacuum. Yes, one’s values and personality are shaped by one’s history. That history in turn is shaped by the larger social context, noted researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), a global leadership research and development organization.

Today, amid the social climate of diversity, gender fluidity, and changing social values, “authentic leadership” is being not so much redefined as taken apart to show the complexity of its nature.

The Impact of Social Context
It’s easy to be authentic at work when you already fit in; that is, if you look or dress like everyone else, noted CCL. But what if you don’t? Authentic ways of leading can get lost or be hidden. You become afraid to speak up. As a result, your idea that is the perfect solution for a clinic problem—one that the dominant group could never have imagined—also gets lost.

The groups we belong to make us feel good about who we are and raise our level of self-esteem, noted social psychologist Henri Tajfel, PhD. And when we’re confident, we speak up about our ideas.

Traditionally, the best leaders were considered extroverted. Such leaders were invariably part of the dominant (white) culture, and invariably men. They could take to the stage metaphorically and charismatically and had a high level of self-confidence. Often, they were seen as “natural leaders.” But then along came Susan Cain, author of Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking. Cain proved how our leadership identities are actually shaped by culture’s social expectations. She also proved how introverts, with their own quiet styles, were good leaders too.

This is why it’s critical to separate who you are intrinsically from who the culture shaped you to be. And that’s where self-awareness comes in.

Assess Your Authentic Leadership Style
The following questions can help you untangle and clarify your own unique authentic leadership style.

• What early life experiences and people impacted you?
• What do you value most and where did those values come from?
• How have your values changed over time?
• What motivates you, both internally and externally?
• Do your behaviors change depending on the group you are in?
• Do you hide parts of yourself at work? What parts?
• If you felt free to lead authentically, what would that look like?
• What first steps can you take to a more authentic leadership style?


No matter what your role in the practice is, there is room for you to explore and nurture your own authentic leadership style, and to use it to the advantage of yourself and everyone around you.

M. Carolyn Miller is an employee development consultant, writer, and instructional designer. Find out more at cultureshape.com.
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Peter Weinstein, DVM, MBA
This Job BITES!

Education, Protocols Can Lessen Risks of Bites and Scratches

by Maureen Blaney Flietner

Twenty-four hours after being bitten and scratched while retrieving his cat that had slipped out of the house, Pete was in the emergency department (ED) being advised that they suspected an abscess and a fast-moving infection in his arm.

Pete, an active, healthy senior who has had pets for nearly 40 years, thought he had done all the right things after the injuries. He had cleaned the wounds and applied antibiotic ointment. The next morning, fever and arm pain had sent him to urgent care where he got a prescription for oral antibiotics. But several hours later, with the pain worse, he had to go to the ED.

After emergency surgical debridement, he received intravenous (IV) antibiotics and fluids for several days before he was discharged. Three months and many dressing changes later, his wounds finally healed.

The emergency was listed as necrotizing fasciitis—what the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls a rare bacterial infection that spreads quickly and can cause death. Who’d have thought?

Cat and Dog Bites—How Common?

How many dog and cat bites are there each year in the US?

One CDC statistic estimated 4.7 million dog bites with 799,700

“We highly discourage employees to ‘wait and see if an injury feels better’ as this attitude often leads to worsening of the injury and higher claims cost.”

—RYLEY GEORGITSIS, RISK CONSULTANT, HUB INTERNATIONAL

Get Smart
persons requiring medical care. But that data is from 1994. Of that number, an estimated 333,700 patients were treated in EDs with an estimated 6,000 (1.8%) hospitalized.

Asked for updated figures, the federal Agency for Healthcare, Research and Quality’s Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) offered discharge data from 2020. HCUP estimated 353,621 ED visits with injuries caused by dog bites and 66,404 ED visits caused by cat bites for that year. For visits due to dog bites, 3.5% or 12,529 turned into hospitalizations. For the cat bites, 11.7% or 11,764. The counts did not include urgent care, primary care visits, or other outpatient visits. The numbers represent ED visits to 995 hospitals in 40 states and the District of Columbia—an area accounting for 85% of the US population that year—and approximate a 20% stratified sample of all US hospital-owned EDs.

Equal Opportunity Injury

Bites and scratches can happen to anyone.

“We have had our fair share over the 10 years I have worked here. Who hasn’t in this industry?” said Samantha Millet, CVPM, practice manager of Bluegrass Animal Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee. “We always take these situations seriously due to the number of health issues that could arise.”

Millet herself was bitten in the face just a few years ago. A new canine patient was initially frightened but became comfortable while she obtained a patient history in the examination room. When Millet put a leash around the dog, the dog did not want to walk so she picked the dog up and walked out. The dog bit her cheek. Fortunately, the bite was not deep. After returning the dog to the family, she washed her face with surgery scrub and, later, was seen by a physician. While the dog had reportedly never shown aggression before, the family took the dog to a behaviorist to ensure it did not happen again, she said.

Jamie Rauscher, LVT, medical manager of Animal Hospital of Towne Lake and Cat Clinic of Woodstock, Georgia, and president of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America, noted that when she was younger, a cat bit her arm. The bite got infected, requiring her to be hospitalized with IV antibiotics and fluids to combat a terrible infection and fever.

But the worst bite/scratch she said she ever experienced was with a feral cat.

“We were trying to get hands on it to sedate it for surgery. The cat ended up lunging for my face, scratching me right below my eye. I ended up with a pretty nasty scratch and a black eye to go with it.”

Aimee Potter, CVT, an AAHA accreditation specialist, recalled an encounter with a dog with leptospirosis in an intensive care unit at a veterinary hospital where she had worked.

“I was trying to be very cautious because he was in some pain. I went to unhook his IV catheter and he bit my arm. Because he had lepto—which is transmissible—I

“The cat ended up lunging for my face, scratching me right below my eye.”

—JAMIE RAUSCHER, LVT, MEDICAL MANAGER, ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF TOWNE LAKE AND CAT CLINIC OF WOODSTOCK, GEORGIA, AND PRESIDENT OF NAVTA
had to go to the doctor, have the wound scrubbed out, and then go on antibiotics as I watched for signs of bacterial infection.

“Another time, a cat patient lashed out at the owner and bit or scratched five employees during the visit,” said Potter. “The cat had to be euthanized. We did not know it was rabies positive until after. Employees had to go to the doctor, get tested, and go through rabies treatment if they were not vaccinated.”

Missy Filarecki, CVPM, CCFP, practice manager of Just Cats Veterinary Clinic, Guilderland, New York, said her clinic has dealt with multiple bites, but none were too serious. “Sometimes, even if you do all the right things, the animals can still be fearful and lash out,” she said.

One of the worst bites she has seen happened to an assistant reaching into a cat kennel to clean a litterbox. The cat, who was rabies vaccinated, was not known to be aggressive and did not give off any warnings. The assistant ended up with multiple cat bites resulting in a trip to urgent care and a course of antibiotics.

**Dangers Differ**

Cat and dog bites and scratches present different dangers.

Avir Mitra, MD, an emergency physician in New York, assistant professor at the Icahn School of Medicine, and spokesperson for the American College of Emergency Physicians, explained that both cats and dogs carry a lot of bacteria in their mouths and nails.

Mitra said cats usually bite or scratch hands and arms. Unfortunately, these injuries can look benign so people often just wash them and don’t see a doctor. But cat teeth can easily puncture skin and drive bacteria deep into tissue.

A common bacteria from a cat bite is *Pasteurella multocida*, he said. And a cat scratch can bring the risk of infection with *Bartonella henselae*, which can cause cat scratch disease. In cases in which the bite extends to the tendon of the hand, Mitra has seen surgical management needed.

Unlike cat scratches, dog scratches are usually less deep but more abrasive. Also unlike cat bites, dog bites are not just simple puncture wounds. Instead, they more often involve tearing action, and dog jaws can exert significant pressure leading to worse wounds, said Mitra.

Dog bites can occur anywhere and can lead to serious cosmetic issues, especially when it involves a face, he said, such as the extensive lip laceration he recently saw on a patient.

“In my experience, this tends to happen with kids who are smaller and tend to put their faces closer to a dog. These wounds are highly prone to causing infection, so, just like with cat bites, we start patients on antibiotics to prevent infection.”

Mitra suggested that anyone bitten or suffering a significant scratch see a doctor. A tetanus shot also may be needed. While many people know the warning about a rusty nail, he said,
many may be unaware that tetanus bacteria also can enter the body through an animal scratch.

**Minimizing the Risks at Animal Hospitals**

Because of the “nature of the beasts,” bites and scratches are unlikely to be eliminated. However, having protocols in place and specialized training can reduce unexpected consequences. Two popular offerings are the Cat Friendly Certificates of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and the Fear Free certification programs.

“We are a feline-only clinic, so it is especially important for our team to be as educated as possible to keep themselves and the cats safe,” said Filarecki, noting that most team members are Certified Cat Friendly. They emphasize a minimalistic approach. They do not scruff cats, which used to be a common practice, because it can escalate a cat’s fear and aggression when it feels a lack of control and inability to escape, she explained.

“We are also big on the use of gabapentin,” she said. “Our protocol is to prescribe it to our known anxious patients and to have their owners give it two hours before they visit. We also prescribe gabapentin to premedicate all cats coming in for any sedated procedure.”

As a general rule, she said, staff are required to go to urgent care immediately after a bite, unless the bite does not break the skin. Any bite is recorded in the OSHA log and hospital records. It’s also important, she said, that the team knows what to do if someone is bitten when the manager is out.

Rauscher said her Fear Free Certified Practice is a “big believer in premedications for fractious patients, towel wrapping for cats, and positive reinforcement for both dogs and cats by rewarding them for their good behavior.

“I feel with better education in regard to handling and restraint, premedications, and educating clients on the benefits of these medications, we have seen bites and scratches reduced over the recent years.”

At the Knoxville hospital, said Millet, veterinarians, licensed veterinary technicians, and assistants are Fear Free Certified and all employees watch safety videos during onboarding.

“We do our best to stay aware if animals have stress, fear, and anxiety when they enter so our staff can appropriately handle them. We incorporate treats, restraint, and medication depending on what works best for the animal and our staff,” she said.

With any bite or scratch, the employee has the option to go to a doctor. In addition, any incident is reviewed to determine how the injury could have been avoided and what to do if a similar situation arises.

**“Purr‘fecting” Interactions**

“New evidence proves that nonphysical and physical human interactions that respect the cat are safer and more efficient for us, in addition to enhancing feline welfare,” explained Ilona Rodan, DVM, DABVP (Feline).

Keeping Clients Safe, Too

In keeping pets and themselves safe, team members also may find themselves educating owners.

“For children and the elderly, bites and scratches can be more detrimental to their health,” said Filarecki. Besides getting information during visits, clients can learn from informative articles in the practice’s newsletters.

Her practice also offers behavioral consults. “Clients fill out a questionnaire of behaviors and we educate them on how to best treat their cat to avoid undesirable behaviors such as biting and scratching.”

Millet said staff members communicate with pet parents about how they might make anxious pets more comfortable about coming to the hospital.

“For a dog, we might recommend treats, medication, waiting outside, or staying in the vehicle until a room is ready. We really try to cater to the animals and the pet parents to help them make it a positive appointment.

“We tell all our cat parents to bring the cat in a carrier and to set the carrier out in the cat’s sight a few days before a visit so the patient can get used to it. We suggest they spray [Ceva Animal Health] FELIWAY on the blanket in the carrier. And if needed, we prescribe medication to make the cat feel calm. Anything to make the cat seem less stressed during the commute and vet visit is what we strive for.”

Protect the Bottom Line

Another consideration is the potential adverse effect on a practice’s insurance costs.

“If a workplace has a high frequency and/or severity of claims, the more money the insurance carrier has to pay out,” explained Ryley Georgitis, risk consultant, HUB International, a North American insurance brokerage. “For the insurance carrier to reduce its losses (or anticipated losses based on the business’ loss history), it increases the premium.

A facility that has a long history of excessive claims may find it more difficult to market its insurance program than one that has a lower claims history.

“The good news is that bite and scratch claims costs are lower on average than claims for sprains, strains, slips and falls,” said Georgitis.
Why? Because insurance carrier claim adjusters will encourage veterinary staff to seek medical attention regardless of the severity of the incident, he said. While a claim may drive up the number of these types of incidents, the overall cost of care and avoided lost time is less.

For example, in a claims pull of AAHA-accredited hospitals with The Hartford as their worker’s compensation insurer between Jan. 1, 2018, and Feb. 2, 2023, there were 1,477 dog and cat bite claims from 263 hospitals. Of those 263, 82 (31%) had only one claim each. Five percent of claims were for lost time, with a total cost incurred of $658,479 and an average cost per claim of $8,552. Of the remaining 1,400 medical-only claims, the total cost incurred was $1,110,997 or $794 per claim.

“We highly discourage employees to ‘wait and see if an injury feels better’ as this attitude often leads to worsening of the injury and higher claims cost,” said Georgitsis. “At the very least, we recommend hospitals file ‘notice only’ reports with their insurance carrier for claims that seem minor. The benefit is that the ‘lag-time’ stops and allows the carrier claims person to gather information, immediately freezing the facts of the case.”

Claims have the potential to result in severe injuries and be very expensive. Georgitsis offered this claim example: An employee was performing a routine dental cleaning on a cat that was under anesthesia, when the employee hit a nerve causing the cat’s jaw to clamp down on her finger. The puncture wound became infected and required surgery, IV antibiotics, labs, office visits, medications, and lost wages. Total payout: $58,000.

A few controls that should have been considered, said Gilmore, are:

- Avoid having the owner hold the cat during treatment. Only employees trained in feline handling should hold the cat.
- Pay close attention to any growling, aggression, or attempting to escape.
- Consider using cat bags, towels, gauntlets, or a slip-free mat. Do not over-restrain.

While bites and scratches come with the territory of being in vet med, practical protocols and proper staff training can help minimize the risk of hospitalization and serious wounds. ❖
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Bridging the Gap to Belonging
A Conversation with Ewan D. S. Wolff, PhD, DVM, DACVIM

Interview by Katie Berlin, DVM

We are living at a critical juncture in 2023.

In the midst of more conversations around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) than ever before, people with whom we share critical patients and break room donuts are being forced to hide who they are, flee their homes, and live in fear simply for existing as they are. Ewan D. S. Wolff, PhD, DVM, DACVIM, internist at BluePearl NE Portland, industry liaison for PrideVMC, and coauthor of their Gender Identity Bill of Rights and Gender Diversity Guide, did not mince words in describing the extent to which anti-trans legislation is affecting our peers both in and out of veterinary medicine.

Katie Berlin: [In your own experience] in veterinary medicine, are our attitudes toward the gender-diverse community and gender-diverse coworkers and clients different than those in the general public and the world at large? Are we more tolerant, more accepting? Are we less so?

Ewan Wolff: I think we have a large portion of the field that just hasn’t thought about it, and like so many things when people haven’t thought about it, the initial reaction may be to not be inclusive. But once people start to think about gender-diverse people outside of abstract stereotypes or movie stuff, or things that are being said in memes they may be sharing around, then I think people start to change their point of view.

If I look at the amount of support that has been building over the last two years for the Gender Identity Bill of Rights (GIBOR), I think it’s a testament to people actually starting to think about the fact that there are actually human beings within the
field who are gender diverse, and that those people are no different than anyone else and worthy of respect and basic rights within the field. And the second people start to rationalize them as human beings just like themselves, then that instinct to immediately “other” people starts to wane. I actually have significant hope for the veterinary profession that with ongoing efforts and education, we can be the most welcoming profession that there is.

**KB:** I’m glad to hear that. I think a lot of us [in vet med] can identify with the feeling of standing out, or not wanting to stand out, because of the things that make us different. And that, I think, does lend us to be a little bit more accepting of people we might view as a little bit different. But in this climate now, things are tense, and from what I understand, you have had personal experience where that has affected your life and your choices about where to live and work.

**EW:** Absolutely. I’m nonbinary, my husband is trans, and we have a kid who’s nonbinary. And to keep things short, the Florida legislature and governor made it abundantly clear in the beginning of 2022, in April, that they would not allow children to be supported in social transition or medical transition. And a bunch of other different rulings, things like erasing LGBTQ history from teaching, preventing teachers from discussing that a child had two parents of the same sex, not allowing providers to use appropriate pronouns and names for kids, and stuff along those lines—and now things like outing children to the entire school if they want to use the restroom. Those sorts of things really led to a climate of hatred and heightened risk of violence that made it unsafe to have our family stay there.

And our concern, more than anything else, was that the state might take the same steps that Texas had taken and start actually taking kids into the foster system and charging parents with felonies for supporting trans kids, which includes nonbinary under the same umbrella. So I contacted BluePearl. I slept on it for the night after the April 20th health department notice came out. And I wrote this long letter and said, “Look, I don’t think it’s safe for us to stay here anymore, and here’s why.”

And I was very fortunate that the company got back to me within five minutes of writing them, and we sat down and talked, and I ended up

Within the first three weeks of 2023, there were 120 bills before the legislature, including things that banned gender-affirming care for adults up to the age of 26.

—**EWAN D. S. WOLFF, PHD, DVM, DACVIM**

**EWAN D. S. WOLFF, PHD, DVM, DACVIM**

Central Line
interviewing out in Portland, and then
they helped us move out there. We
had our house on the market two
weeks after that notice. We left without
having a house on the other end; it was
an incredibly fast exit. So fast, in fact,
that there were friends of ours who
didn’t even realize that we had left,
because we had been so busy packing
everything rapidly. But I was very
fortunate that BluePearl supported that
move, and by extension Mars.

KB: That’s an incredible story. It
makes me think about all the people
who cannot leave, who are in that
environment and working in our
veterinary hospitals next to us, and
we may not know that they’re going
through that.

With the increase in support that
you’re seeing for the Gender Identity
Bill of Rights, I want to believe
that inside of [those hospitals] is
a safe space, and that even if the
outside climate is inhospitable,
gender-diverse people, say in
Florida or Texas, can still feel safe
at their place of work. Do you think
that’s true?

EW: I think being able to have a
refuge inside your workplace is
incredibly important. And I want to
stress to everyone that it is very
much not just Florida and Texas;
it’s well over half the states at this
point. Within the first three weeks
of 2023, there were 120 bills before
the legislature, including things that
banned gender-affirming care for
adults up to the age of 26.

The reality is that people need a
really high level of allyship right now;
they need it in states where they’re
being affected like this very badly. I
think making work as welcoming a
place as possible is very important. I
also think that having some degree of
flexibility to ask people how they’re
doing, to see what can be done for
people, that’s also very important.
Basic human rights are essential, and
a high level of allyship and emotional
intelligence is essential right now too.

There have been moments in history
when individual hate laws have
been put into effect, the sum total of
which resulted in the extinction of a
community, the LGBTQ community
included. And it’s very difficult for
people who are not being directly
impacted to see that a community is
being wiped out until it is gone.

One thing that I want to say to people
who are not necessarily paying
attention—because everybody has
very busy lives, everyone is under a
lot of strain, and I recognize that. And
I want to say that for those people
who are not seeing this happen,
they should understand that what is happening is communities are starting to be wiped out.

KB: I am trying to wrap my mind around what you said, and I just can’t do it.

EW: When you dehumanize individuals, when you villainize individuals, when you do not permit their name to be said on a page, when you don’t permit their history to be said, when you refuse to recognize their existence, their names, when you make it difficult for them to be employed, when you employ medical conscience so that they can die on a pavement outside of hospitals without people treating them, when you refuse to provide them with medical care that they need in order to stay healthy, when you impact their jobs so that they can be discriminated against, when you impact their schools so that they may not be able to be in an environment in which they can be themselves, there is one result of all of that.

There was a leader for the Southeastern ACLU, for the LGBTQ rights there, who said that it’s beginning to look a lot like the intent is for us not to exist.

The ACLU has a bill tracker where they show all these things happening. There’s only one interpretation that you can come to when trans healthcare is being removed gradually, initially for little kids, then for adolescents, then for people up to 21, then for people up to 26. This is a gradual and insidious strategy, and it is very effective. I never expected to be a political refugee within my own country, and yet here we are.

KB: It’s staggering to think about in those terms.

EW: And I think that the shocking thing about all this is that there’s no cost involved in any of this. This is just a matter of being kind and decent to other human beings, because they’re another human being with a different life than your own. And enough of us spend time reading novels and watching movies and stuff along those lines that we know that there’s this human desire to understand how other people exist. Other people are more like us than we suppose.

KB: Belonging is the part of DEIB that you told me you really wanted to talk about. What makes belonging different from discussions in general about diversity, equity, and inclusion?

EW: Belonging is something that is less tangible than DEI efforts. People know when they belong. It’s kind of like people used to say the definition
of obscenity is that people know it when they see it.

The definition of belonging—very similar to the definition of discrimination, for that matter—is that it’s something that is understood from the perspective of the people involved. In the case of discrimination, just because people may not perceive microaggressions, they may not perceive stereotyping, but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist.

But belonging, coming to a place and feeling like that is your place rather than a place that you have been invited to, and a place that is somewhat under your control as an active participating member in that place: that is, I think, just vital. And we’re still very focused on the first three elements (DE&I), [which] are very important. [But] from the standpoint of importance, I think belonging can’t be overrated. And a lot of the times, that’s the portion that we don’t really get.

**KB:** That feeling of being embraced by a place and the people in it is one of the best feelings on the planet and something that everybody should have a right to and be able to go and look for. And that really brings into perspective how much this has to do with wellbeing, not just of people in the gender-diverse community, but people they work with. Everybody is going to be happier and healthier if they’re a team that all feels like they belong.

**EW:** I absolutely agree with that. One of the things that’s often cited in corporate discussions of DEI work is that teams are more productive when they’re more inclusive. And I think that’s very much true. But I want to circle back to something that I said—that I have a significant hope that the profession will continue to be a more inclusive place. There’s one caveat in that; that’s why it’s important to get to the belonging piece. Unless we actively go out and build a pipeline whereby more people from underrepresented communities can end up being represented within the profession, whether that’s coming through vet tech school or veterinary school or people who are being brought up into management positions and stuff along those lines—unless we make those efforts, that belonging piece will never happen. Because people will always be the one queer person in the room, or they’ll always be the one person from that particular underrepresented minority. And then, yes, it does feel very difficult to belong.

**KB:** [There are plenty of rooms in vet med] that used to have one woman in them—and in a relatively short time, we’ve become a profession that is predominantly identifying as female. It would be wonderful to be able to see that happen with the gender-diverse community also; that we quickly decide that we are all not just going to be tolerant, but go out and look for ways to invite people in. And I love that image in my head of the arms of the profession reaching out...
and saying, “This is a place for you, you belong here, come work with us. We want to work with you.” We have a lot of heart in this community. We have big hearts for our patients. And sometimes I wonder if we need to turn them a little bit more to ourselves.

**EW:** Oh, I couldn’t have put that better. I think that in so many different ways, we’re learning that the piece that is missing from veterinary medicine is that we have failed to recognize that we’re all people. We have put output as such a giant priority, whether you’re talking about output for research or teaching or production or things coming through the door, that we’ve forgotten about the fact that this is also a profession that operates entirely by humans. There are no trained dolphins that are running this profession. This is a human-run profession. And as part of that, we have to deal with each other as people.

And so when people say that our efforts on DEI are wasted efforts and we should be focusing on the animals, I think they should look around them and realize the rate at which people are exiting the field, having suicidal ideation, having to take long absences from their jobs. And maybe they should think a little bit more about the fact that there might be multiple different problems that are leading to that in the first place. We need to care for ourselves as a profession.

**KB:** It seems like there’s a big gap between signing [the Gender Identity Bill of Rights] and creating a space that is not only safe but allows you to be who you are. At a systemic level, what are some things our community can do to bridge that gap between the signing and the belonging?

**EW:** Education is a tremendous first step, and education has to be more than something that you did at one point in time. It has to be continuing to learn where you can. People have to be willing to make mistakes and occasionally get called out on those mistakes and learn and grow.

People have to start looking around them and saying, “If I don’t see gender-diverse people in this space, if I don’t see Black queer people in this space, and I know these people exist in my community, why am I not seeing them on this committee? Why am I not going to big conferences and hearing talks from people who are neurodiverse and nonbinary, intersectional individuals within the community?” If people don’t educate themselves and bring people in, then it’s very difficult to move forward.

Ally is not a ribbon that you can wear or a bumper sticker. It’s something that requires an effort every single day.

—EWAN D. S. WOLFF, PHD, DVM, DACVIM
Ally is not a ribbon that you can wear or a bumper sticker. It’s something that requires an effort every single day. As far as being an ally to the gender-diverse community right now, we’re at a point in time in which being an ally means being willing to be a little bit bruised, because we’re really beyond the point where we can simply have allies who say things that are helpful. We need people who are really willing to put some skin in the game, and there are going to be times when this is very uncomfortable. There are going to be times when it feels like there is some risk involved with being an ally because those are the times that we live in. But like many other times that have come before where there has been risk in helping communities that were underrepresented, that risk is not forgotten. Taking those risks is not forgotten.

If you’re in states where people are affected by legislation, be willing to say, “Are you okay? Is there anything that I can do to help?” [Take] a minute to read the Gender Identity Bill of Rights and sign it.

[Take] a minute to see what the benefits are in your company and if gender affirmation benefits are not offered, be willing to say, “Hey, I just wanted to inquire, is this something that isn’t listed or is it something we’re not offering and if not, why?” [Take] a moment to intervene when somebody makes a remark that’s transphobic or homophobic. Casual transphobia happens all the time. Correct someone when they don’t use someone’s pronouns correctly—and that may not be transphobic, that may be just a mistake. Be willing, if a client is harassing someone at work, to say, “Hey, we respect this person. This is our vet tech, Sandy, and her pronouns are she/her.” Being willing to take those steps is incredibly important; just never forgetting that people are other human beings and remembering to treat them in the way that they have said they want to be treated. ※

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

If you or someone you love need support, visit this list of hotlines and other resources: pridevmc.org/support.

Visit pridevmc.org/gibor to learn more about and sign the Gender Identity Bill of Rights (GIBOR).

Pride VMC has an enormous library of resources for the entire veterinary community.
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JUNE 2023  63
Heather Stitzel, RVT

Technician
Edmond East Animal Hospital
Edmond, Oklahoma

Year started in vet medicine: 2009
Years with practice: 1
Nominated by: Lori Voogt

Why Is Heather So Awesome?
Heather is dedicated to quality patient care and genuinely cares about the team’s morale. She is proactive in finding solutions and helping her team learn and be engaged. Her mentoring and leadership skills are instrumental in the quality care and service we provide to the animals and clients in our community.

How Does She Go Above and Beyond?
In addition to spearheading our hospital’s AAHA accreditation efforts, she is also a Registered Veterinary Technician, RECOVER BLS and ALS certified, a Karen Pryor Academy-Certified Training Partner, and she has a grooming certificate.

In Her Own Words
Why do you love your job: In the veterinary field, each day brings something different. I enjoy the challenges of calming a fearful pet, handling the untouchable cat, providing nursing care to sick patients, educating new pet owners, helping to ease the pain owners face when saying that final goodbye and working with a group of smart, talented, funny, and compassionate professionals.

Pets at home: Three rescue dogs: Kobi (9-year-old pit mix), Luna (5-year-old papillon with microphthalmia), and Molly (13-year-old Chihuahua, who is super friendly and cuddly, and seeing eye dog to Luna).

What brought you to the profession: I am a science nerd. I enjoy the challenges of a difficult medical case. The body is so complex, and when it isn’t working well, I enjoy using my skills to partner with our veterinarians and owners to help restore health.

Hobbies outside of work: I enjoy getting together with two of my friends and creating pottery pieces. I love hiking with my husband of 28 years, Rick. Photographing random interesting pieces of the environment, scenery, mushrooms, plants, and animals is very therapeutic. Another hobby is traveling with family and finding new areas to explore, food to eat, and experiences to have.


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