



Canadian **VET** Practice



CANADA'S VETERINARY NEWSMAGAZINE

SPRING 2022 VOLUME 17, NO 2



Transforming Lives



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VET Pet owners' expectations during veterinarian-client-patient interactions – and the challenges of meeting them

Research suggests that the approach to communication used by veterinarians during a veterinarian-client-patient interaction can impact veterinary clients' involvement in the decision-making process and their ultimate satisfaction. A focus group study conducted at the University of Guelph, between July and October 2019, aimed to determine pet owners' expectations with respect to information exchange and decision-making during veterinarian-client-patient interactions and to compare veterinarians' perceptions of those expectations and the challenges they face in meeting them.

Five pet owner focus groups (27 owners) and three veterinarian focus groups (24 veterinarians) were conducted with standardized open-ended questions and follow-up probes. Thematic analysis of the transcribed data was conducted to identify trends and patterns that emerged during the focus groups.

Pet owners' expectations continues on page 2



RVT Nicole with Luna & Bandit, who were in for their first kitten visit

Photo courtesy of Caledon Mountain Veterinary Hospital, Caledon, ON.

TEAM Steps to increase online sales

Does your clinic have an online store? Would you like to increase online sales? At the Fall Veterinary Education Today (VET) virtual conference, Kathy Davies, CEO of myVETstore Canada Inc. shared some valuable tips on how to increase your clinic's online sales. Online sales are especially important right now, considering the ongoing pandemic that has greatly reduced the number of clients going into veterinary clinics to purchase their pet's food and other items.

3 methods to increase online sales

- 1) Increase the number of clients registered for the site
- 2) Increase average transaction size
- 3) Increase frequency of transactions per client

Increase the number of clients registered for the site

Success with an online store is all about awareness! Let clients know that you have an online store, encouraged Ms. Davies. While she acknowledged that it may be difficult to talk about your online store to all clients, she noted that there will often be times, during the day, where a frustration comes up and that frustration could be solved through an online store. This presents a great opportunity to tell the client about your online store and how it can help solve their problem.

Increase online sales continues on page 6

TEAM Human-to-human Monkeypox and risks to domestic animals

By Scott Weese, DVM, DVSC, DACVIM

Local transmission of monkeypox wasn't on my 2022 bingo card, but I guess we're learning to expect the unexpected. I commonly talk about monkeypox when discussing zoonotic diseases, especially those associated with importation of animals, as this was highlighted by an outbreak of monkeypox in the US associated with imported rodents from Africa in 2003. However, in the past the focus has always been on zoonotic (animal-to-human) spread. The current situation is making us think about some other issues, and spillback of monkeypox virus into animals from people.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a potentially nasty disease caused by the monkeypox virus. The virus is in the same family

Monkeypox continues on page 8

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CANADA'S VETERINARY TEAM NEWSMAGAZINE



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Canadian Vet Practice is honoured to have the following distinguished veterinarians and technicians as members of our Advisory Board. In addition to imparting their knowledge and expertise on animal health issues, they often review article submissions, guide editorial topic selections, and help to keep the newsmagazine useful and relevant to veterinarians in Canada.

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Pet owners' expectations continued from page 1

Three pet owner-based themes were identified:

- 1) understanding the client
- 2) providing information suitable for the client
- 3) decision-making

In addition, three barriers for veterinarians affecting information exchange and decision-making were identified:

- 1) time constraints
- 2) involvement of multiple clients
- 3) language barriers

Theme 1: Understanding the client

"It's a partnership". Pet owners expressed the expectation of being *"in partnership with [their veterinarian]"*. Participants explained that partnering with a veterinarian, to successfully exchange important information relevant to providing care and making decisions for a patient, had a positive impact on their relationship.

Pet owners emphasized the importance of the veterinarian respecting an owner's knowledge and understanding of their own pets because they are the ones who *"speak for their pet"*. They felt that their veterinarian's medical knowledge should be combined with the owner's observations and understanding of their pet to fully understand the necessary next steps.

Only two veterinarians specifically mentioned being *"partners"* with their clients; others discussed how listening to clients' observations, while gathering history, positively impacted veterinarian-client rapport by allowing clients to

become more engaged. Gathering history was expressed as a challenge and they emphasized the importance of being *"on the same page"* as their clients. However, some veterinarians found this to be a challenge when the client wanted to discuss less urgent health matters and disregarded their veterinarian when they raised new or what they believed were more urgent concerns.

"Just listening" and "Being aware of my concerns". Pet owners stressed the importance of veterinarians demonstrating that they were listening both to what clients say verbally and by evaluating body language to assess clients' emotional state, expressing that listening requires veterinarians to focus on the present moment, *"being mindful of the person and animal standing there"*, as this is necessary to relate to their clients.

Most veterinarians mentioned listening to clients when initiating appointments as an important contribution to a positive client experience, and a mechanism to engage clients and build rapport while minimizing assumptions. A few veterinarians recognized the importance of acknowledging clients' emotions, yet many expressed challenges around reading clients' body language. Some veterinarians expressed difficulty *"being present"* with clients while having other concerns on their mind or when feeling emotionally drained.

"Reading where you are at with your knowledge base". Many pet owners expressed appreciation for when their veterinarian assessed the client's current knowledge base or their desire for information upfront, to vary the amount and way information is conveyed. Having the relevant information to make informed decisions allowed clients to feel that they were able to provide the best care they could for their pet.

Pet owners' expectations continues on page 5

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VetLaw**On to the next issue: Associate retention strategies**

With the return to a level of “normal” through our continuing pandemic which demonstrated the clear ability of veterinary clinics to pivot to alternative service delivery models, veterinary practice owners are now faced with the critical issues arising from the shortage of veterinary professionals. Not only is it very difficult to recruit and secure a new Associate, it has become necessary for employers to consider innovative employee retention strategies to ensure that the current complement of professionals is not compromised with the departure of Associates to competing clinics.

Written employment agreements

One means of ensuring longer term service of an Associate is to clearly set out the terms of engagement in a written employment contract that sets out the fundamental terms of the relationship. Without question, the certainty that arises for both the employer and the employee, in having a firm understanding of their respective rights and obligations, will enhance the engagement and promote a longer term relationship. This is particularly true if a fixed term agreement is entered into; that is, a contract that establishes an obligation on the parties that the employment relationship will continue to exist for a specified period of time. This is in contrast to a contract for an indefinite term, which typically provides both the employer and employee with options to terminate the relationship at any time subject to adhering to the provisions of the contract – these would typically just mean that some period of reasonable notice of resignation or termination be provided.

The introduction of written employment agreements clinic-wide can lead to a more predictable human resource arrangement.

Employment retention strategies

More and more, veterinary employers are being faced with the need to offer existing Associates with some “sweeteners” in order to bind and retain their services. The competition for hiring veterinary professionals (both veterinarians and veterinary technicians) has grown fierce in recent months, resulting in the need to offer “premium” employment terms including salary hikes, profit-sharing plans and, in some cases, options for equity ownership participation in favour of Associates.

Salary premiums

In recent months, we have anecdotally witnessed a gradual increase in the starting salaries being offered to Associates. Practice owners, citing the difficulty in securing an Associate, have expressed a willingness to increase the compensation as needed to attract and secure candidates. This is a simple approach; however, it tends to establish a “baseline” for compensation that may not be sustainable into the future. A mechanism to review salaries on not less than any annual basis would be appropriate in any employment agreement and practice policy manual.

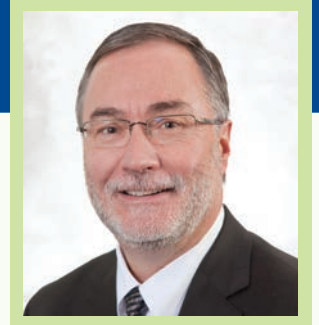
Profit-sharing plans

There has been a noticeable increase in the frequency of instructions from practice owners to include some form of profit-sharing arrangement as an additional incentive to retain the services of Associates. The typical arrangement provides that an Associate would be entitled to a “bonus” payment, provided that the Associate achieves a certain “benchmark” revenue stream. Obviously, in addition to promoting hard work and billing, such a program may make your clinic distinguishable from a competitive clinic as the candidate considers her or his selection of an employer. In these arrangements it is important to clearly identify those items of revenue production that are to be included in the calculation of the “benchmark” amount so that there is no confusion leading to disappointment.

Options of equity interests

Another form of employee retention strategy is the granting of an option to an Associate to acquire an equity interest in the corporate practice. The typical approach would be to include such an option in the employment agreement, which clearly sets out (a) the date upon which the option may be exercised (b) the extent of the interest that may be acquired (c) the price to be paid by the Associate for such an interest and (d) the manner in which notice of exercise of the option is to be initiated. In some cases, it may be necessary to establish a price that represents a discount to the otherwise fair market value of the practice, in response to the torrid level of competition for Associates. This strategy must be exercised only with some significant caution – once an Associate acquires an equity interest, regardless of whether the shares are voting or non-voting, he or she becomes a “shareholder” and is provided with specific legislative rights through the applicable provincial business corporations legislation, including the right to claim that his or her rights have been oppressed by the majority shareholders. If the employer is going to offer an equity position in the clinic, it is critical that a Shareholders’ Agreement be entered into which clearly establishes the rights and obligations of all shareholders to each other, and to the veterinary corporation.

Mr. Jack is counsel at the law firm of Borden Ladner Gervais, LLP (“BLG”) with a mandate to serve the needs of the veterinary community and enhance it on a national basis. Mr. Jack chairs a focus group relating to veterinary legal matters within the firm’s Healthcare Group. He can be reached by email at dcjack@blg.com or by telephone at 1-800-563-2595.



Douglas C. Jack, B.A., LL.B.



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Pet owners' expectations *continued from page 2***Theme 2: Providing information suitable for the client**

“Explain it to me in terms that I can understand”. Pet owner participants agreed that they wanted their veterinarian to explain things in a way that they understood. Some indicated that when their veterinarian used medical jargon, they *“have to go home and Google what they're saying”*.

Aside from one participating veterinarian who mentioned that they have difficulty removing medical jargon during discussions with their clients, the veterinarians did not discuss tailoring their language or avoiding medical jargon.

“Visual aids... coupled with the verbal explanation is often very, very helpful”. Pet owners discussed their difficulty comprehending new information when it was only conveyed verbally, explained that veterinarians should be able to explain things in a variety of ways. They found using a visual aid alongside a verbal explanation was an effective method for their veterinarian to share information with them. Participants described using *“pictures from textbooks”, “the internet”, “x-rays”,* or visually *“demonstrating on the animal”*, to explain a diagnosis as especially helpful.

The veterinarians briefly mentioned using visual aids, such as *“pictures”, “models”, “diagrams”, “x-rays”, “hand-drawings”,* and *“demonstrating on the animal”* to support their explanations. Veterinarians discussed methods used to verbally convey information to their clients to enhance a client's recall of information, specifically, repetition and analogies being the main techniques discussed. A few veterinarians mentioned their team was also important for ensuring information was repeated to their clients.

“Having a handout would honestly be really, really helpful”. Pet owners appreciated receiving informational handouts from their veterinarian because it allowed them to reflect on what was discussed during their appointment. This was especially important during times of emotional distress for a client, for example, when receiving information about a new diagnosis, as some felt that these scenarios made it difficult to absorb information.

Veterinarians felt providing additional resources for clients was important because clients may otherwise forget what was discussed. Although veterinarians widely discussed using handouts, some doubted whether their clients read them. While veterinarians felt that handouts provided clients with something tangible to take home, adding value to their service, some mentioned discontinuing the use of personalized handouts due to the time associated with preparing them.

Veterinarians also described clients' emotions as a challenge that often interfered with the clients' ability to absorb information. Handouts and following up with clients were two methods used to ensure they were on the same page as their clients after appointments, though many veterinarian participants described difficulty finding time to follow-up.

“I go home, and I Google right away”. Pet owners mentioned searching the internet in some capacity, whether they checked *“Google”, “Wikipedia”, “Blogs”* or *“Chat Rooms”*, yet many acknowledged that these sources are not as reputable as sources of information provided by their veterinarian. They expressed wanting their veterinarian to provide reputable sources of information. Some pet owners discussed booking appointments with their veterinarian after reading information online, or in the media, to have their veterinarian clarify what information was reliable and to help them *“make an informed decision.”*

All veterinarian participants viewed clients seeking alternative information sources as a challenge. Several felt that clients prioritized pet health information received from other sources, leading to decreased client engagement with their veterinarians. This trust in non-veterinary sources, including pet store employees, breeders, and the internet, was a particular challenge in relation to clients seeking information about nutrition.

Though the internet was the most widely discussed challenge in relation to client information seeking, veterinarians conveyed that most of their clients understood that information found on the internet may not always be reputable. Two veterinarians expressed that clients seeking information on the internet was an opportunity for a discussion. Some veterinarians mentioned the importance of providing *“good”* and *“reputable”* websites for clients.

Theme 3: Decision-making

“Explaining the options” and “Having the final say”. Pet owners expressed appreciation for veterinarians who understood that they want to make

informed decisions and do what is best for their pet. They discussed the importance of being told the necessity of diagnostic or treatment options as this helped them understand the long-term effects of their decisions. Several participants mentioned wanting financial estimates to be part of the discussion of options.

Pet owners felt that they held the responsibility of being the advocate for their pet that *“cannot speak”* for itself and expressed that being provided options gave them some reassurance that they had control over decisions related to their pet's care. They recognized they had the ultimate say in decisions related to their pet's healthcare.

It was important to pet owners that their veterinarians were honest about their pet's prognosis and didn't give them *“false hope”*. It was additionally important that their veterinarians were honest about any professional limitations that existed. Pet owners described that when veterinarians provided options, it reduced the clients' concerns about veterinarians' financial motivations behind their recommendations.

Veterinarians recognized that clients wanted to be provided with options. The most common approach to providing options in practice involved providing more than one option upfront to all clients. Some expressed feeling more satisfied with their interactions when they fully informed clients of their options and thought that it helped clients understand the value of each option. Veterinarians, however, emphasized the importance of not judging their clients based on the option they chose.

In the other approach, veterinarians did not initially provide options, rather, they provided the gold standard upfront and allowed clients to initiate conversations about options, which veterinarians described often occurred when clients were *“cost conscious”*. Veterinarians described wanting to provide all clients with the gold standard to offer all clients the same standard of care. One veterinarian explained, *“I always say I offer every single client that walks in the gold standard regardless and then we work back from there based on what they can manage”*.

Veterinarians mentioned the importance of providing cost estimates prior to any treatments or procedures, as it may affect the client's decisions and minimizes surprises on their bill. This was especially important when clients told them to *“do whatever you need to do”* for their pet, because clients often wanted different options once the cost estimate was provided. While veterinarians felt it was important to respect cost conscious clients, they emphasized the importance of not feeling guilty about the costs when providing estimates to clients.

“Being told what to do” can be “Uncomfortable” and “Awkward”. Pet owners reflected on past experiences with veterinarians who appeared to make decisions on behalf of the client. Several participants described *“being told what to do instead of being presented an option”*, as being *“uncomfortable”* and *“awkward”*. Clients thought that this approach to decision-making limited their ability to communicate potentially important information. Many of those who described a situation where they felt their veterinarian limited their opportunity to choose, mentioned either leaving the practice or seeing a different veterinarian within the practice.

Many pet owners associated *“feeling pressured”* or a lack of involvement in the decision-making process with the belief that veterinarians' intentions were solely based on money. Pet owners appeared to associate a lack of options with veterinarians' financial motivations, most often in relation to nutrition.

Pet owners mentioned wanting to hear their veterinarian's recommendations. As suggested by one client *“And I would always throw it back to them, what would you recommend if this was your dog?”*. Clients mentioned taking their veterinarian's recommendations into consideration while contemplating their options.

Veterinarians expressed the desire to practice gold standard medicine which can be influenced by cost, because costs can be *“challenging to clients which is then challenging to [veterinarians] because [they] can't practice the way that [they] want to in a lot of situations”*. Though veterinarians wanted to practice best medicine, many recognized that clients don't want to feel pressured by only having one choice.

When veterinarians discussed their experience with the commonly asked question, *“what would you do if it were your dog?”*, some said they did not enjoy making this type of recommendation because they either did not want to place their values on the client or they did not feel their recommendation

would be feasible for the client, while others took this as an opportunity to suggest the “gold standard” treatment. Most veterinarians expressed only offering recommendations when asked by their clients who were struggling to decide on their own, or when they had built a trusting relationship with their clients over time.

Veterinarian-specific barriers

Time constraints were the primary concern raised by veterinarians. Feeling rushed but trying not to appear rushed was important to veterinarians as they recognized it affected the client experience. Having standardized appointment lengths was considered challenging because of variable client needs. Most veterinarians expressed difficulty relaying information when multiple clients were involved in the care of the pet because it was difficult to get everyone “on board” to make decisions and veterinarians felt that it was extremely important for them and their clients to “be on the same page”. Language barriers, for example, if the client had difficulty understanding English, made it challenging for veterinarians to feel that they have properly

explained information needed by clients to make well-informed decisions. Some veterinarians employ staff that speak multiple languages as an aid to manage language barriers.

Summary

Results suggest that pet owners expect to be supported by their veterinarian to make informed decisions by understanding the client’s current knowledge, tailoring information, and educating clients about their options. Breakdowns in the information exchange process can impact pet owners’ perceptions of veterinarians’ motivations. Pet owners’ emphasis on partnership suggests that a collaborative approach between veterinarians and clients may improve client satisfaction. **CVP**

Full research article: Janke N, Coe JB, Bernardo TM, Dewey CE, Stone EA (2021) Pet owners’ and veterinarians’ perceptions of information exchange and clinical decision-making in companion animal practice. PLoS ONE 16(2): e0245632. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0245632>

Increase online sales *continued from page 1*

Marketing your online store is also key to awareness. Ms. Davies advised that it’s important to utilize Facebook, Instagram and other social media that is used by people of various ages. To help with content, images and documents are available on the myVETstore website. Email campaigns can be monthly and/or used to announce product launches and relaunches. Ms. Davies stated that with every launch campaign they have helped a clinic with, they have seen an increase in both client registrations on the site and online sales.

- Talk about the site to clients
- Create a link on your website to your online store
- Mention your webstore on your on-hold message, email signatures and client statements
- Promote through social media
- Participate in email campaigns
- Signage at front desk and exam rooms

Increase average transaction size

An order minimum for free shipping or other gifts in an excellent way to increase the average size of online purchase transactions. Look at your most frequent order values as a starting point advised Ms. Davies, to help determine the best price point to use to for increasing transaction size. As an example, If the most common order value is \$100, consider free shipping or a discount for all order over \$125.

Consider promotions available from, for example, pet food manufacturers that you can pass on through online purchases. Offer seasonal promotions such as \$10 off all orders over \$100, suggested Ms. Davies.

Personalize online purchasing for your clients. Ms. Davies shared that older people shopping online will sometimes have trouble navigating through all the available products to find the diet, for example, recommended by their veterinarian for their pet. myVETstore representatives will help these clients by adding their pet’s diet to “my favourites” for them. The next time the client shops online then all they have to do is go to their favourites tab and find the diet they are looking for.

Ms. Davies explained that clinics should not limit what they sell on the clinic webstore to the products they sell in the clinic. People will shop online for toys and treats that you don’t necessarily sell in the clinic. In fact, Ms. Davies indicated that over the counter (OTC) products that you could get at a big box store (like wellness diets for healthy pets), and other products (such as treats) right now are myVETstore’s fastest growing category. People are coming to shop for the diet that their veterinarian had recommended for the health and wellbeing of the pet, but they are also looking at what else they can buy for the pet!

- Create an order minimum for free shipping or other gifts
- Offer seasonal promotions
- Provide a more personalized experience
- Do not limit the website to products that you sell in the clinic

Increase frequency of transactions

Approximately 35% of all clients registered for the myVETstore site use it on a regular basis, indicated Ms. Davies, sharing further that 90% of clients shop on our site a minimum of 6 times per year. This is an important performance indicator, she noted, as repeat business is important to the veterinary hospital.

To help increase the frequency of client transactions on your clinic’s webstore, Ms., Davies said wherever you can, promote the Auto Orders discount on site and throughout the hospital, using tools like stickers on food bags.

myVETstore can help using by using email campaigns to inform clients about pending changes to their pet’s diet. Use of live chat can help customers get their immediate questions answered. And if a certain size bag of food that a client has on Auto order is discontinued, they will be sent an email asking if they want to switch to an available sized bag on Auto Order.

Lastly, by not limiting your webstore offerings to products that are sold in the veterinary hospital, you can motivate clients to keep coming back to your webstore. Remember, said Ms. Davies, wellness diets and other items (e.g., treats) are the fastest growing categories, and growth of online sales of these items has been further spurred by the pandemic since people haven’t been able to get out to retail stores to purchase these items.

- Encourage Auto Orders
- Allow us to help you
- Consider the products you sell

Conclusion

Ms. Davies concluded by saying that the key to increasing online sales is to ensure that when clients make an online purchase, it is not a “one and done” transaction. What’s important she stressed, is that the experience is positive, so people keep coming back to buy the diet for their pet. It’s important to us and to the clinic, she said, that the pet is kept on the diet recommended by their veterinarian. **CVP**

As a former Partner with an international accounting firm, Kathy Davies combines her past experience and her passion for animals as CEO of myVETstore Canada. She works with clients, veterinarians and their teams with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of our beloved pets. Over the past three years, Kathy has seen over 160% growth in myVETstore, and it is not uncommon for one of her dogs to take part in a video call or two. When she isn’t working, you can find Kathy with her dogs (and her humans): Nannie, a Husky German Shepard mix, Kia, a rescue from Northern Ontario, Baloo, a goofy golden doodle and Humphrey, a big Newfie puppy.

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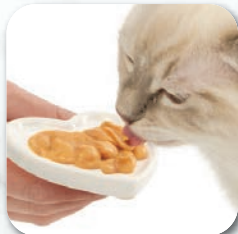
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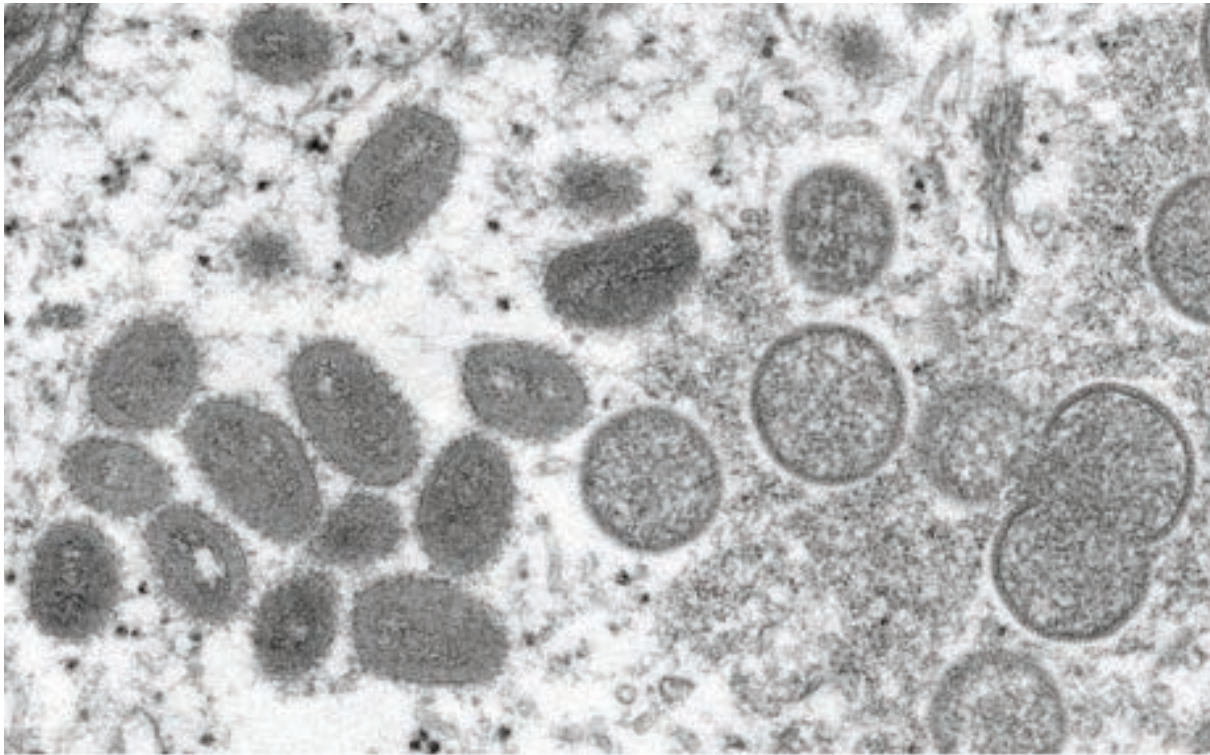
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Monkeypox *continued from page 1*

Electron microscopic image of the monkeypox virion (Source: CDC Public Health Image Library 22664)

as smallpox, but is nowhere near as transmissible or severe. It's mainly found in tropical rainforest areas of Central and West Africa.

What is the reservoir of the virus?

You might say “*duh... it's monkeys*” but it's not. It's another misleadingly named virus, like chickenpox (which doesn't come from chickens, and isn't even a poxvirus) or cowpox (the reservoir of which is actually rodents). We don't actually know for certain what species is the natural reservoir of monkeypox virus, but it's likely one or more small mammals in Africa. It was named “monkeypox” because the disease was first reported in monkeys, but monkeys aren't the true reservoir, they are just (like us) susceptible to infection.

What animal species are susceptible to monkeypox?

We know that a number of species are susceptible through natural or experimental studies. These include:

- People (obviously)
- Various non-human primates
- Prairie dogs
- Ground squirrels
- Various rodents (including some pet species, such as rats, although susceptibility of rats seem to vary even by rat species, with some being highly susceptible and others resistant)
- African hedgehogs

There's also potentially susceptibility of other species, such as:

- Rabbits. There's some mixed information, with very young rabbits clearly being susceptible and more variable susceptibility in older rabbits. It's possible that older rabbits are not really susceptible to natural exposure, just artificial exposure like intravenous injection of the virus.
- Pigs. Pigs are on various lists of susceptible species, but I haven't found much detailed information about this yet.

Not much is known about other large mammals either. There's one report that suggests potential infection of monkeypox from a gazelle, and that gazelles with pox-like lesions were common in one area. However, the evidence is pretty limited.

Guinea pigs and golden hamsters seem pretty resistant to infection.

So, potentially susceptible species include a few domestic species and could include some wild rodents. Missing from the list are common pets such as dogs and cats, and other livestock such as cattle and horses. A challenge here is differentiating “*not susceptible*” from “*not known to be susceptible*”.

It's probably a mix of both – we have species that are truly not susceptible but we also have species that haven't been studied enough to really know. We also have to interpret older experimental studies with caution because of evolution of the virus. We can probably have confidence in limited or no susceptibility of many common domestic species that are present in areas of Africa where the virus is endemic, since it's likely there would have been reports of infections in dogs, cattle or goats if they were highly susceptible.

So, realistically, the main concerns are probably with rodents, maybe ferrets, rabbits and potentially pigs.

Can people infect animals with monkeypox?

We don't know. All the focus to date has been on transmission of the virus in the other direction. Monkeypox virus can be transmitted by droplets and direct contact, but it's not highly transmissible, so close and prolonged contact is likely required. We have that kind of contact with pets, so we have to assume there's some risk of *exposure*. Whether that's enough to cause *infection* is the big question. I suspect the risk is low but not zero.

How do we answer some of these questions?

I'd love to look at spillback risks from infected people to their pets. I've been working the phones (email actually) to see if anything is being done or whether we can set up some surveillance. It's not straightforward, as we need access to testing, a way to identify exposed animals, and various approvals. I got my first email about a potential animal exposure today and that's presumably going to increase.

Hopefully we'll get some information and not repeat the typical pattern where animal transmission risks get thrown out the window when the focus is on human infections. Spillback into domestic animals here is probably quite unlikely, but it would be nice to have some actual data to understand the risk and what/if control measures need to be used. With emerging infectious diseases, it's best to over-react (within reason) at the start than to try to play catch up later on.

What can be done to reduce the risk of transmission to animals?

The most important thing is to control the disease in people, at least in the context of what's going on in North America and Europe, where the issue is now human-to-human spread, versus infection from a wildlife reservoir.

If someone has monkeypox or is concerned they might have monkeypox, using basic control measures make sense including reducing direct contact with animals. Distancing and masking will help reduce droplet spread. Keeping pets out of the bedroom at night makes sense too, given the long contact time in a small airspace. I don't think drastic measures are needed, just some easy, basic infection control practices that are not overly disruptive but likely reduce any risk that might be present.

What should veterinarians do if an owner calls saying they have monkeypox and are worried about their pet(s)?

At this point, I'd tell owners to stay isolated with their animals, and reduce contact with their animals within the household, to reduce any uncertain risks (but not freak out or do anything drastic). I'd tell them the risks are low for most pet species, but since we don't know too much, it's best to take some precautions. I wouldn't want them to take the animal to a clinic unless it's sick. That all sounds eerily like the myriad COVID-19 discussions, doesn't it? It goes to show that infection control is a lot of basics that we just need to do right.

Source; Worms & Germs Blog: www.wormsandgermsblog.com
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Veterinary Business Today

Navigating staff compensation challenges during inflationary times

Inflation is affecting all of our practices: the cost of doing business is eating away at our profitability in so many areas. In my own practice, we raised prices by 4% at the beginning of the year, yet it still wasn't enough to combat the ever-increasing costs we are facing. As a result, we've had to increase prices again on some of our more popular services, to help us maintain our budgeted profit for the year. There was just one catch: while doing regular staff check-in meetings, we heard from several that inflation is really affecting them and thus the raises we gave them at the beginning of the year are not enough to keep up with personal expenses or add to personal savings. How could we raise prices and not address the impact this would have on staff? We could understand there would be a lot of discontent if we raised prices and didn't address the situation our staff are finding themselves in.

In the previous *Veterinary Business Today* article, I discussed ways to retain employees when their financial compensation wasn't a factor. Unfortunately, financial compensation is a huge challenge now - so what can your practice do to deal with employee concerns about their compensation amidst the high levels of inflation we are facing?

There are three approaches any practice owner can use to help navigate the compensation challenges that are not going away anytime soon: **transparency, education and collaborative approaches to compensation.**

Most of our employees do not understand the costs involved in running a veterinary practice. They may see expensive services, or costly client invoices, and think we are just money-making machines. Why would they think otherwise if we haven't been transparent in explaining how much it costs to run a veterinary practice? Now would be a great time to have a meeting with staff and explain directly how inflation is impacting your business. For example, give examples of how much more you are having to pay for utilities, insurance, wages etc. compared to the same time period last year; show staff how your budget has been negatively impacted. This exercise lets them know that your business is being impacted too. You don't necessarily have to tell them how profitable your business is, but you do need to tell them that maintaining a certain level of profitability is needed to maintain reinvestment in the practice and to ensure the viability of the business. Any business that isn't profitable will not have the ongoing resources to maintain a good level of client, patient and employee care. The long-term health of the business requires it to be profitable.

At the same time, we need to educate ourselves and our staff about the cause of inflation and how little control one business has over it. There are numerous economic forces causing our high inflation and the only tool we directly have to deal with it is raising prices. Ask your staff how they feel clients would appreciate price increases to match the rate of inflation. Likely, some sort of fee increase is in order but it is inevitable that some of our clients will have to decrease spending on veterinary care if our prices get too high. It truly is a balancing act of not enough and too much. In addition, we can highlight the difference between your practice and a company like Apple, that has recently raised wages for hourly employees by 10%. These huge corporations can be much more profitable than a veterinary practice, or have products or

services that their clients will pay a high price to acquire. Too often people will hear about these companies that seem to do much more than we can, so we need to educate our staff on the differences between your practice and some deep pocketed conglomerate.

This leads us to our last, and most important, approach to staff compensation in a high inflationary period - a profit-sharing plan. This plan allows staff to have influence over additional compensation by their combined efforts in decreasing costs or increasing revenue. This inflationary period is a great opportunity to look inward and review our operations and processes to see where we may have gotten sloppy about how we do things, and to look for increased efficiencies or opportunities to grow the business, while still offering great client and patient care. The bonus is that if when we can collectively find ways to increase our profitability, we can share the benefits with our team.

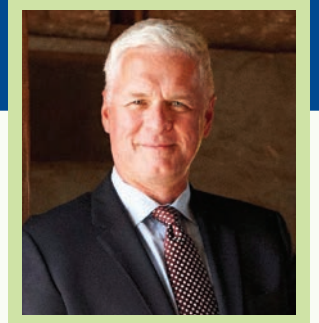
Here is how this looks in action: while you are explaining the negative impact of inflation on the business, you can also set a challenge for your team based upon expected profitability. If they can increase profitability beyond what is currently expected, you will share some of that real profit with your staff. It may be 10, 20 or even 30%. You don't need to share exactly what your current profit is, but you can give an example of the potential bonus for the staff. For example, you can state that if you can increase profitability by 10% you would give 20% of that increased profitability as a bonus split equally amongst all the staff.

The beauty of profit sharing is that it instills a sense of collective accountability with everyone benefitting from a combined group effort. Employees will understand that there are a lot of costs associated with a running business that they can manage. It also demonstrates that the practice owners want to help and support their staff. If you blend in what we discussed about being transparent about the effect inflation is having on the business, and work to educate your staff on what is causing inflation, you will have a team that feels engaged and appreciative of having a solution to help them financially in these challenging times.

You can visit Dr. Pownall's website at www.veterinarybusinessmatters.com, on twitter @dvmbusiness, and the Veterinary Business Matters Facebook page. The website for McKee-Pownall Equine Services is www.mpequine.com and for Oculus Insights is www.oculusinsights.net.

Prior to becoming a veterinarian, Dr. Mike Pownall worked as a farrier. His interest in equine lameness led him to attend the Ontario Veterinary College, graduating in 2001. In 2002 he and his wife, Dr. Melissa McKee, started McKee-Pownall Equine Services, an organization represented by three equine veterinary clinics with 11 vets and 20 support staff spread across the Greater Toronto Area. He is also a partner with Oculus Insights, offering business education to veterinarians throughout the world.

Dr. Pownall received his MBA from the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario, and was the class valedictorian. He presents internationally on business strategy, pricing, digital marketing, and technology for veterinarians. He also contributes to numerous journals on business management topics.



By Mike Pownall, DVM, MBA

VET Creativity – The secret sauce for thriving in veterinary medicine

“If I told you that you used a skill that you already have - and I have research to prove that it improves your wellbeing, resilience, confidence and uncertainty - would you do it?” asked Caroline Brookfield, DVM, as she began her talk about creativity at the Fall VET virtual conference.

“Let me send you back to kindergarten”, she said. “What were you doing when you were happy? Perhaps you were the artist that liked to paint and draw? Or were you the scientist who liked to play with sand and water, and glitter of course.” Regardless of what made you happy in kindergarten, you were undoubtedly creative, stressed Dr. Brookfield. For kindergarteners, she said, creativity equals life!

Dr George Land was hired by NASA to develop a creativity test. Not surprisingly, 98% of kindergarteners scored as creative geniuses on the test, shared Dr. Brookfield.

What is creativity?

Two types of creativity exist in our lives. Big C creativity involves things like DaVinci, Picasso, and the CN Tower. Small C creativity, on the other hand, is everyday creativity; it is things we do every day like choosing an outfit to wear, making a meal, or putting a little Vetheart cut out on a dog’s splint.

“Do you have some kind of neat way you wrap the tape on your catheter?” asked Dr. Brookfield. Everyday creativity makes your life more joyful, and it can help you become a better human, she asserted.

Creativity is for everyone...but it dwindles

As adults, we have been trained to come up with quick, routine answers. Only 2% of adults who took George Land’s test scored as creative geniuses, shared Dr. Brookfield. So where does creativity go as we age? Why are 98% of kindergarten aged children exceptionally creative and only 2% of adults exceptionally creative?

Creative thinking

There are two main ways we think about creativity:

1. Divergent thinking.

- The sky is the limit. Anything is possible. “I wonder how I can get my colleague to take that appointment for me this afternoon.” No right or wrong answer. Many possibilities.

2. Convergent thinking.

- Black or white. One answer. “I wonder who didn’t clean the lens again.” One correct answer.

Take a vinyl exam glove and ask someone what it can be used for. The convergent thinker will answer, “an item of personal protective gear to wear during the examination of a patient.” A divergent thinker will have a more open mind to the possibilities and may give answers such as, “You could use it as a balloon toy,” or “It would make good antlers in a deer costume.” Divergent thinking leads to greater creativity as it involves letting go of assumptions and starting to look at things from a wider view.

One thing to take away from this presentation is to *separate your divergent thinking from your convergent thinking*, stressed Dr. Brookfield. She explained that Dr George Land uses the analogy of driving; while both stepping on the gas and hitting the brakes work well independently, hitting the gas and the brakes at the same time will result in you going nowhere!

Creative problem solving

In order to facilitate creative problem solving, it is important to accept that there are no bad ideas, stated Dr. Brookfield. Bad ideas often lead to good ideas, she noted, and we should all stop worrying so much about what other people think as this only stifles our creativity.

There is a place for everyone to participate in creative problem solving. First, diverge. Let everyone think of all the possibilities. Then work together to clarify, implement, ideate, and develop all possible solutions to a problem. Finally, converge to determine what the best solution will be.

Why should I bother being creative?

We are struggling in veterinary medicine, stated Dr. Brookfield. We need to step back and find creative and novel solutions to solve our problems. It’s time to stop and ask what lights you up inside! Creativity helps lift our mood. It improves our performance, well-being, and resilience. Veterinary professionals are struggling right now to determine how to provide services to our clients in a way that keeps our boundaries safe around our mental health and to also get pets the treatments they need.

We see blocked cats being turned away from care facilities because they are full. That’s not okay, stressed Dr. Brookfield.

We are seeing staff being yelled at by clients about whatever. That’s not okay.

There are veterinarians getting home to see their families 4 hours late because they stayed late to finish their medical notes. That’s not okay

We are seeing veterinarians, technicians and other professionals in this industry leaving the industry or dying from suicide. That is not okay!

We need innovation to solve these problems, asserted Dr. Brookfield. But we need creativity first, she said. We all need to try something new, face the possibility of failure, and then try again. Innovation, she noted, is the combination of creativity plus delivery of new ideas.

Resilience is facing a setback and recovering. Using creativity will result in improved tolerance to ambiguity and greater resilience. This will lead to an overall improved sense of well-being.

Increasing our everyday creativity

Dr. Brookfield shared 5 everyday habits we can use to increase our Individual creativity. These can be remembered using the acronym **DANCE**.

Daydream

- Let your mind wander. When you allow your thoughts to not focus on anything specific, the brain is incredibly active! Often, an “aha” idea or answer to a problem will suddenly come to mind.

Ambiguity

- By nature, people hate ambiguity, and we need to resolve it. Mindfulness helps you stay in the moment and not just jump to the status quo solution.

Novelty

- Imagine your brain is a universe full of stars! Don’t simply have the same latte every day. Try something new! Attend a session at a conference that you thought you wouldn’t like.

Curiosity

- Let yourself be curious!
- Divergent curiosity is wanting to know what the possibilities are. It’s being curious for the sake of curiosity.
- Specific curiosity is when we cannot stand not knowing the specific answer to something. Don’t pick up your phone and google where you might have seen that actor before, advised Dr. Brookfield. Let your mind be curious about it.

Edit later

- Stop worrying about that voice in your head that keeps saying, “Oh, that will never work!” Bad ideas can lead to good ideas.

“We all have that inner voice; I call mine ‘Todd’,” shared Dr. Brookfield. She said when she hesitates to do something, she just tells her inner voice, “Thanks for trying to keep me safe, but I’m going to do this anyway because *I’m not going to die*”.

“Use your big brain to convince your personal Todd that nothing bad is going to happen if you share your ideas and your gifts with the world!” encouraged Dr. Brookfield. People who put their hands up at a meeting. People who get up on stage. They still have that fear. They just do it anyway.

The (not so) amazing race for talent

Studies show that creative employees are half as likely to be looking for another job and are better performers on the job, noted Dr. Brookfield. Over two thirds of employees say they want to use their creativity more and a whopping 88% of Gen Z employees believe that creativity is essential for

success. Still, less than 20% of employees feel they can take a risk to be creative in their employment.

When we don't welcome creativity, we risk creating a work environment with a "You will work until it hurts" atmosphere, or having employees that say, "Not my problem!" when presented with a workplace challenge.

A workplace where everyday creativity is cultivated is one with an atmosphere of "Why don't we combine all our ideas," when faced with a challenge. It's one where people reserve judgement of their own ideas and of others. It's a place where employees feel safe to rediscover that curious kindergarten kid that is unafraid of failure! Kindergarteners are creative!

Conclusion

"Creativity is life. It is not just for artists. We all need to DANCE," exclaimed Dr. Brookfield.

If we want real change in veterinary medicine, we need to find creative solutions and foster a workplace environment where our staff feel safe to share their ideas and personal gifts. **CVP**

Dr. Caroline Brookfield is an author, veterinarian, entrepreneur and stand-up comic who helps leaders, executives and unapologetic "left brainers" rediscover their unique style of everyday creativity, to build confidence in uncertainty, improve well-being, and boost job performance and satisfaction. Caroline expresses her own creativity through performance, writing and creative problem solving, like sneaking vegetables into smoothies. She is based in Calgary, Alberta.

For more resources from Dr, Brookfield, please see:

www.thereluctantcreative.com

www.carolinebrookfield.com

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL44W3P8iFap1PVjkyeUDveOhJQToEWhzo>

TEAM Study finds dogs breeds popular on social media

Dogs are extremely popular on the social media app TikTok, where the hashtag '#dog' has amassed 244.8 billion views. PuppyHero.com analysed 218 dog breeds to see which ones generated the most views. The Golden Retriever ranked #1, with 21.2 billion views!

The 10 most popular dog breeds on TikTok

Rank	Dog Breed	Hashtag	Views (Billion)
1	Golden Retriever	#goldenretriever	21.2
2	German Shepherd	#germanshepherd	9.1
3	Rottweiler	#Rottweiler	8.0
4	Pug	#pug	6.7
5	French Bulldog	#frenchbulldog	5.4
6	Labrador Retriever	#labrador	5.3
7	Bulldog	#bulldog	5.2
8	Pomeranian	#pomeranian	5.0
9	Poodle	#poodle	3.4
10	Border Collie	#bordercollie	2.9

For the complete study data, visit <https://www.puppyhero.com>
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Industry News

Animal Calling

A short documentary on the mental health issues currently impacting the field of veterinary medicine

Animal Calling is a short documentary following a recently graduated veterinarian as she reflects on the mental health issues currently impacting the field of veterinary medicine. It is a touching look into the thoughts of a young veterinarian as she ponders the emotional and psychological challenges faced by those working in animal care. *Animal Calling* is beautifully directed by Candice Dixon, a student at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario.

You can find more information at <https://www.animalcallingdoc.com/>

It's tick talk time

The emergence of Lyme disease and the rapid geographical range expansion of certain tick species in Canada are important issues for public health. The public can participate in the monitoring of ticks in Canada by submitting tick photos on eTick.ca for identification by a professional. The identification results, combined with other data such as collection date and locality are then mapped so that all users may visualize the information related to any/all species for any given year and/or geographical area.

Anyone who finds a tick on themselves or a pet, can download the free eTick.ca mobile app to submit tick photos and location data.

2022 tick submissions

AB 286	NL 4
NB 27	PE 5
ON 881	MB 17
SK 116	NS 257
BC 384	QC 104



Veterinary workforce shortage

Across Canada, veterinary professionals (veterinarians and veterinary technologists/technicians) are increasingly concerned with the current state of the veterinary profession and its future. A severe shortage of veterinary professionals is negatively impacting the health and well-being of the veterinary workforce and places additional pressures on the level of quality care they can provide for their clients.

The CVMA has initiated the *Veterinary Workforce Project* to assist and support veterinary stakeholders in identifying and delivering on solutions to both veterinary workforce shortages and workplace well-being.

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/priority-areas/veterinary-workforce-shortage/>

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/veterinary-resources/business-management/2020-cvma-workforce-study/>

Proposed Canadian Consensus Guidelines on Osteoarthritis (OA) Treatment in Canines

The Frontiers of Veterinary Sciences online journal has just published the *Proposed Canadian Consensus Guidelines on Osteoarthritis (OA) Treatment in Canines*. The guidelines were created by a diverse group of Canadian experts with a strong clinical and/or academic veterinary background in treating OA in canines and will serve as a summary of treatment recommendations, based on the Canine Osteo Arthritis Staging Tool (COAST) defined OA stages one to four.

As one of the most common diseases in canines, OA is experienced by 1 in 4 dogs worldwide. Working collaboratively to improve the treatment of

OA for Canadian pet owners, the authors of the guidelines wanted to create a document that would aid veterinarians in the early treatment of OA, as well as provide insights into core and secondary treatment steps in more severe OA.

The guidelines are available internationally through Frontiers in Veterinary Science, and can be found at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2022.830098/full>

Veterinary industry initiative to support people of Ukraine

We have heard countless heartbreaking stories stemming from the invasion of Ukraine. We have seen how war and human conflict does not limit its effects to people but also their beloved pets — pets who give love without judgment. Innumerable veterinary hospitals, animal shelters, and pharmacies have been destroyed in the conflict.

Those that remain have scarce resources, medications, and care providers. Many refugees have been forced to leave their beloved pets as they fled their homes.

In the midst of sudden loss and sadness, we have been hearing stories that exemplify the strength of love and commitment to pets from the Ukrainian veterinary community, where veterinarians and their staff are risking their lives to save beloved pets.

In solidarity with the veterinary community and support for the people and pets of Ukraine, Trupanion is proud to organize Paws For Ukraine, a fundraising initiative in partnership with MightyVet. We are raising funds to help provide resources including access to pet food, medical supplies and medication, and helping to reunite pets with their owners. Join the effort! <https://pawsforukraine.org>

New WSAVA Executive Director

Veterinary leadership advocate, Richard Casey MBA has been appointed Executive Director of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) with a brief to accelerate its work to create a global community of veterinary peers and to advocate on issues of concern affecting companion animal veterinarians around the world.

Richard Casey has held senior leadership roles at UK-based veterinary charities Blue Cross, and PDSA. Prior to entering the veterinary sector, his career was focussed in human resources and leadership development for a range of blue-chip companies.

Mr Casey is also Senior Vice President of the Veterinary Management Group, which represents those in leadership and management roles in the veterinary profession in the UK. A regular speaker and writer on issues relating to veterinary leadership and management, Mr Casey holds an Executive MBA, a Postgraduate Certificate in Strategic Management and Leadership and is researching his Doctorate in Business Administration.

For further information, please contact:
Rebecca George, rebecca@georgepr.com



Sumy, Ukraine | March 31, 2022 - Dr. Andrii Klietsov sheltering with his family while being interviewed by Dr. Steve Weinrauch. VIA DR. ANDRII KLIETSOV

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) news

We're with you every step of your way. This information aims to update you on the CVMA's recent activities and resources across Canada.

A fresh new look for the CVMA

The CVMA is proud to announce a fresh new look for the association. The new logo and website convey a modern, professional image of the veterinary profession. The site is easy to use on all devices with more

intuitive navigation and a responsive design. Visit canadianveterinarians.net to check out our new look.

2022 CVMA Convention: July 21-24, 2022

Your in-person experience package includes access to over 100 hours of continuing education, access to hands-on workshops and labs, entry into the exhibit hall which will host over 80 booths, social programs including

the CVMA Social Evening, and much more. Your at-home experience includes access to over 40 hours of live-streamed continuing education and networking opportunities. Find a breakdown of the registration structure at pheedloop.com/cvma22/site/home.

The CVMA presents revised position statements

• **Legislation Concerning Dangerous Dogs**

The CVMA supports legislation on dangerous dogs if it is directed at fostering the safety and protection of the general public and domestic animals, is not discriminatory toward a specific breed, and considers the welfare of all animals deemed to be dangerous.

• **Pain Management in Animals (Previously Pain Control in Animals)**

The CVMA holds that veterinarians have a duty to use appropriate pain management protocols for surgical procedures and for the treatment of medical conditions that result in or are likely to cause pain.

• **Ventriculocordectomy (Devocalization) of Dogs**

The CVMA opposes non-therapeutic ventriculocordectomy (devocalization) of dogs.

• **Tail Docking of Dairy Cattle**

The CVMA is opposed to the docking of the tails of dairy cattle. Tail docking does not contribute to the improved health and welfare of the cow.

Find more information about these and other position statements under the *Policy and Outreach* section of canadianveterinarians.net.

The Working Mind program

Significant mental health challenges in the veterinary workplace create

additional pressures such as time off work, permanent loss of workers, increased cost of disability programs, and reduced workplace productivity and worker satisfaction. **The Working Mind (TWM)** program addresses workplace mental health issues caused by inherent workplace stresses such as day-to-day workflow pressures, interpersonal relationships, and conflicts, and issues unique to veterinary medicine like ethical and moral distress. The two courses offered, **The Working Mind Employee** and **The Working Mind Manager**, use trained facilitators, workshop manuals, contact-based videos that present actual employees and managers dealing with issues related to the program's content, discussion exercises, and personal goal setting to enact the coping skills within the program. Employees and managers who take TWM training have shown an increase in resiliency skills, a decrease in stigmatizing attitudes, and an increase in mental health wellbeing. TWM is offered at a significant discount to CVMA members, thanks to Royal Canin's generous sponsorship. Visit canadianveterinarians.net/the-working-mind to learn more and sign up.

Togetherall – A mental health support resource

Members of the CVMA, including all Canadian veterinary school students, can join the **Togetherall** platform—a powerful mental health support resource available at no cost, anytime and anywhere they have internet connection. **Togetherall** is an online peer-to-peer community supervised by licensed mental health practitioners—that empowers members to anonymously share their innermost thoughts and feelings in an inclusive environment. Find more information about Togetherall under the *Veterinary Health and Wellness Resources* section of canadianveterinarians.net/veterinary-resources.

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