

Tufts University Veterinary Student Conducts Survey on Willed Body Donation Programs

Lindsey Nielsen, a first-year veterinary student at Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, is surveying veterinary students at schools throughout the United States on their opinions on willed body donation programs.

Nielsen initiated the survey because Tufts University is frequently approached by students from other veterinary schools who are interested in learning more about body donation programs and how to start one. Tufts has had a willed body donation program for small animals for more than 10 years. The program has supplied all the cadavers needed for the school's anatomy training, as well as for other training, including continuing education programs. Tufts also recently started accepting farmed animals from local farms to be used as cadavers for anatomy training.

The goal of the survey, which is supported with funding from AVAR, is to assess student ethics regarding willed body donation programs (versus other sources of animals) and to determine what some of the concerns are with regard to implementing these programs. This information will then be used to support students at other schools who are seeking to start a program.

If you are interested in filling out a survey, please contact Nielsen at Lindsey.Nielsen@tufts.edu.

Deadline for completion of the surveys is August 1, 2006. Survey results will be published in a future issue of *Alternatives*.

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges Holds Education Symposium on Alternatives in Veterinary Education

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) hosted an education symposium in Washington, D.C., in March entitled "The Use of Animals in Veterinary Medical Teaching – Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement." In attendance at the conference were faculty of U.S. and foreign veterinary schools, animal research interests, and representatives of animal protection groups (including AVAR veterinary consultant Susan Krebsbach, DVM, and National Director Teri Barnato). Also attending were representatives of the American Veterinary Medical Association, alternatives manufacturers, funding agencies, and agents of the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Animal Care (USDA-APHIS).

The USDA-APHIS was the symposium's primary sponsor. "Charged with enforcing the Animal Welfare Act, Animal Care supports efforts to implement the three 'R's' of refinement, reduction, and replacement of the use of animals in teaching, research, and testing. We recognize that this symposium offers a unique opportunity to foster cooperation and build bridges between the veterinary academia and the animal protection community," said Chester Gipson, deputy administrator. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Alternatives Research and Development Foundation, which funds and promotes the development, validation, and adoption of non-animal methods in biomedical research, product testing, and education.

AVAR's Petition Highlighted

The symposium covered a wide range of topics, including information on adult learning theory, the benefits and drawbacks of using animals as teaching tools, regulatory issues regarding animal use, ethical issues surrounding the use of animals in education, information on specific alternatives to the harmful use of animals in veterinary education, and a discussion on building bridges with the animal protection community.

AVAR's Petition for Rulemaking and Enforcement Under the Animal Welfare Act to Eliminate Violations of the Review of Alternatives Provisions, which was filed with the USDA in 2002, was highlighted in a presentation on compliance and regulatory issues. Dr. Robert Willems of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service provided a comparison of citations immediately after the petition was filed with a more recent inspection of U.S. veterinary schools, at which time USDA inspectors reviewed teaching protocols to see if a search of alternatives to harmful animal use was done and documented. He noted that, immediately after the petition was filed, most veterinary schools were cited for not doing a literature search for alternatives when animals were used, but there were no recent violations in this regard. However, the USDA is aware, for example, that many veterinary schools continue to use terminal procedures in their training, even though there clearly are numerous alternatives to them, many of which are being used at other veterinary schools. Other harmful uses of animals also continue at many U.S. veterinary schools, even though many varieties of alternatives exist.

Federal law requires that institutions search for alternatives and justify why an alternative cannot be used; the law does not require the use of alternatives. Subsequently, the schools which continue to use terminal surgeries in their student training, for example, have completed the literature search for an alternative, documented their findings, and justified not using the alternative, thus complying with federal law. The USDA inspectors' next job will be to look at the justifications being used for not using non-harmful alternatives. The USDA also clarified that terminal surgeries are considered painful procedures under the law, even though anesthetics are used.

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Numerous presentations were made by developers of alternatives to using animals in veterinary education, including information about simulators and models. Information was also provided on client donation programs and shelter medicine programs as alternatives where the patient is not harmed or benefits from the procedure. A University of California program was highlighted where animals who have a variety of surgical needs are brought to the school from local shelters, and students perform necessary surgeries under the supervision of faculty.

Survey of Animal Use

The results of an AAVMC survey on animal use in veterinary medical schools were provided at the symposium. This survey was an alternative to AVAR's Educational Use of Nonhuman Animals in U.S. Veterinary Medical Schools for the 1998-1999 School Year survey. AVAR's survey included information about animals authorized for use from the active class protocols (required by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee). If the actual number of animals used for a particular protocol was provided by the school (and every school had ample opportunity to do

so), this was the number that was used in the generation of data for the AVAR survey. The study commissioned by the AAVMC looked at essentially the same categories of animals used and killed in veterinary education in the same school year, but their survey included information about actual animals used, as opposed to animals authorized for use. While the results were substantially different between the two surveys, the number of animals used and killed in veterinary education still remains in the thousands each year. This alternative survey has yet to be published, but the AAVMC indicated that it should be within six months.

Dr. Paul Waldau, director of the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, gave an excellent keynote address on "Ethical Issues Impacting Animal Use in Veterinary Medical Teaching." In his address, he noted that it is the role of the veterinary profession to be healers, not harmers. He also noted that there have been many studies comparing alternatives with traditional training methods and that alternatives are clearly the way to go for many reasons, not the least of which the use of alternatives does not compromise

a student or an animal. Numerous organizations, including AVAR, participated in a poster session and model demonstration highlighting alternatives. AVAR's poster was a DVD of students from several U.S. veterinary schools being interviewed about using alternatives to harming animals in their education.

The AAVMC's education symposium provided a wide range of important information for faculty of veterinary medical schools. It confirmed that using traditional methods of training veterinary students, where animals are compromised and/or killed, can be replaced by humane methods that provide the same or better training results. Dr. Susan Krebsbach commented to the symposium audience, "It is so enlightening and empowering to see a collection of veterinary educators gathering together to confer about alternatives to the harmful use of animals — something that was only discussed behind closed doors when I graduated from veterinary school 10-plus years ago." Additionally, the underlying symposium's theme, which seemed clearly conveyed to all attendees, is that animals matter and that veterinary training should reflect nothing less.

AVAR Creates DVD of Interviews of Veterinary Students Regarding Alternatives

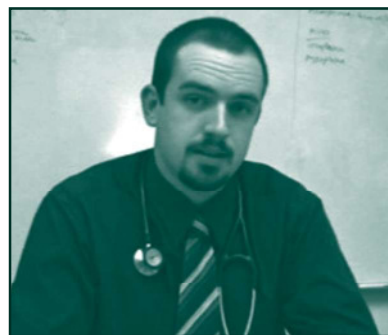
AVAR's poster presentation at the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges' Education Symposium was a DVD of interviews of current veterinary students discussing the positive influence of non-harmful alternatives to animal use in veterinary education. The DVD, produced by AVAR veterinary consultant Dr. Susan Krebsbach, is entitled "Everyday Heroes — Veterinary Students Advocating the Use of Humane Teaching Methods." It provides information about currently available alternatives, such as synthetic models (e.g., Rescue Critters, DASIE, vascular access models), computer-aided learning materials (e.g., The Virtual Heart, Diagnostic Pathfinder), simulators (e.g., Dr. Aboud's model for simulating live surgery), spay and neuter programs, and killed body donation programs.



Tufts University veterinary students Lindsey Nielsen, Amy Earl, and Melissa Bryant-Neal discuss the school's killed body donation program in the DVD.

On the DVD, students from Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine promote a client donation program for obtaining cadavers for both small and large animal training, students from the University of California tout their surgery program using animals from shelters, and students from Western University and the University of Wisconsin voice their opinions about humane education and the use of models and computer programs for learning basic skills.

This video presentation gave veterinary students an excellent forum to speak openly about how the use of humane teaching methods have positively affected their education and have provided the necessary training to make them skilled veterinarians. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the DVD for a nominal charge (to cover the cost of postage) can contact pam@avar.org or download at www.avar.org.



Western University student James Ransom talks about his school's use of alternatives in training.