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ALTERNATIVES

IN VETERINARY MEDICAL EDUCATION



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SPOTLIGHT ON TWO SCHOOLS

OSU Ends Terminal Surgeries More Veterinary Schools Transitioning to Alternative Training

The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Veterinary Medicine has eliminated the last remaining terminal surgeries from its curriculum as of the start of this semester. With that change, there are now a total of six veterinary schools in North America that do not perform terminal surgeries in their curriculum.

That tally is based on the latest information available from responses to an AVAR survey of all 32 veterinary schools in the United States and Canada. According to the survey responses, eight other veterinary schools have eliminated terminal surgeries in their core curriculum and, of those eight, at least two only have terminal surgeries in elective large animal courses (not in small animal courses).

The terminal surgeries previously required of OSU's third-year veterinary students

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New Shelter Medicine Program Launched at Auburn University



Whitney Lemarr, a fourth-year veterinary student at Auburn University, examines a shelter cat.

Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine has launched a new shelter medicine program with funding provided by Maddie's Fund. The foundation is giving Auburn University \$1.5 million over the next six years to create and support a comprehensive program that includes both classroom instruction in shelter medicine issues and a clinical rotation through participating area animal shelters.

Dr. Brenda Griffin, an assistant research professor at Auburn University, is the director of the new program, officially named the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program. Dr. Griffin said the program will expose Auburn University veterinary students to the "small animal herd health" issues that are common at animal shelters. For example, coursework will focus on infectious

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OSU Ends Terminal Surgeries

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were in the Operative Practice Course and involved "a live dog non-recovery laboratory," according to information provided by the school. That surgery training has been replaced with an additional surgical sterilization laboratory where the animals are recovered and an additional orthopedic surgery laboratory which uses cadavers and models. The school also has increased student anesthesia training, as well, according to Melissa Lamb Peale, director of public relations and communications for the College of Veterinary Medicine.

The animals used in the "recovery" labs come from animal shelters, working dog organizations, and rescue groups. The students also for the first time this year will work with rescued Greyhounds. The animals are returned to the rescue groups for adoption after they are sterilized.

OSU College of Veterinary Medicine Interim Dean John A.E. Hubbell explained that the surgery curriculum change was the result of an ongoing evaluation of the school's training program. He also indicated that the students should receive better training with the alternative surgery training now offered. "Every year we evaluate our curriculum to ensure that we

are offering our students the best preparation for a career in veterinary medicine," Hubbell wrote. "We are optimistic that these changes will provide our students with a better and more complete experience in the principles and practice of basic surgical skills and techniques."

Third-year veterinary student Bethany Suchowiecki said the curriculum change was a positive move for the students. "This change has provided incredible relief to those of us who have been against the terminal surgeries from the beginning of our veterinary careers. I'm glad that people are starting to realize that these types of procedures are unnecessary. Alternatives to doing harm to our patients are better for the animals, and the students will gain a better understanding for surgical procedures with the intention of recovering the patients."

AVAR National Director Teri Barnato said that ending terminal surgeries at OSU is a welcome development for all involved, including the individual animals who would otherwise be killed and the veterinary students who will no longer have to endure the stress of killing their patients after surgery training. It also is a

positive step for the entire veterinary profession, as more veterinary schools move to adopt a more humane curriculum.

AVAR filed a petition with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 2001 asking for enforcement of the alternatives provisions of the federal Animal Welfare Act after numerous violations of the law were discovered following a study on animal use in veterinary schools. As a result of that petition, the USDA has stepped up its enforcement, looking more closely at whether schools are searching for alternatives to harmful and fatal animal use in veterinary training.

"OSU should be congratulated for making this positive transition," said Barnato. "With nearly a half of U.S. veterinary schools now having eliminated terminal surgeries from their core student training, we are hopeful that the remaining schools will realize that viable alternatives exist and follow suit in the near future."

For information on which veterinary schools have eliminated terminal surgeries and which haven't, see the "Comparison of Alternatives Offered at Veterinary Schools" chart on pages 6-7.

New Shelter Medicine Program

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disease epidemiology, strategies for pet population control and animal behavior issues.

The clinical rotation will follow with opportunities for on-site consultation, diagnostic support, and teaching in the shelters. Dr. Griffin said the shelter medicine program will not include or replace any surgery training at the school. (Veterinary students at Auburn University already are performing spay or neuter surgeries on shelter animals, who are brought to the school and then returned to the shelters after surgery.) Other components of the shelter medicine program will include summer fellowships for non-lethal shelter medicine research, post graduate resident training, and continuing education for private practitioners.

"It is a very different environment in caring for 100 animals as opposed to one," said Dr. Griffin, comparing the shelter environment to a private veterinary clinic setting. The program gives them exposure to the shelter environment, Griffin added, and hopefully raises an awareness of the need for veterinary leadership in shelter medicine.

By establishing a shelter medicine program, Auburn University joins a growing number of U.S. veterinary schools which are offering opportunities to their students to learn about and develop expertise in shelter medicine. Other opportunities include a new two-week shelter rotation at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, a shelter medicine residency at the University of California, Davis, and a

classroom based shelter medicine program at Iowa State University. The latter two are also funded by a grant from Maddie's Fund.

Dr. Laurie Peek, veterinary consultant for Maddie's Fund, said the foundation has made shelter medicine programs a priority because of its focus on the no-kill movement and the desire to improve the overall health of shelter animals, some of whom may be staying in shelters for longer periods of time. "We want to get veterinarians involved," said Peek, "and have an educated pool of people out there ready to go."

Maddie's Fund grant guidelines for veterinary schools are currently being revised and will soon be available on the foundation Web site at www.maddiesfund.org/grant/vet_school.html.