Veterinary Students Making a Difference

Western University SCAVAR Expands Activities

Students Host Meatout, Rescue Homeless Animals and Work on Foie Gras Ban

The spring semester has been busy for the Student Chapter of the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (SCAVAR) at Western University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Pomona, California. As the organization grows and expands, so does our outreach into the community and capacity for improving the status of all animals in our society.

The end of our fall semester saw the formation of VeCARE, Western University's Companion Animal Rescue. Because we are a veterinary school, numerous stray, lost, and abused animals land on our doorstep. Members of SCAVAR realized, rather quickly, that we desired an organized manner for caring for these animals, locating their caregivers, or finding them a loving home. That desire burgeoned into the formation of a group of SCAVAR members, which works closely with local humane societies, animal rescue organizations, the campus community, and College of Veterinary Medicine student organizations (large animal, exotic animal, emergency and critical care). To date, we have welcomed a number of animals into our fold, and a wide range of animals have found new homes.

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Student Chapter at UCD Helps with Mexico Spay Camps

The AVAR student chapter at the University of California, Davis (UCD), has made the Mexico Spay Camps one of the group's main priorities. UCD first-year veterinary student Christi Payne started the Spay Camp projects in 2003 and is now recruiting other members of the AVAR student chapter to help.

During the most recent Spay Camp in March, Christi and two other UCD veterinary students, Merriss Waters and Teresa Plagman, traveled to Juarez during their spring break to help with the Spay Camp clinics. They also drove clinic supplies from Northern California down to the Mexican border. On the return trip, they brought back four rescued Mexican dogs who were relinquished at the Spay Camp for recovery and placement.

In addition to volunteering for the Spay Camps, the UCD student chapter members also support the AVAR-sponsored bill which would ban the force feeding of ducks.
Mexican Spay Camps

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and goose and the sale of foie gras in California. Several students were scheduled to attend the first legislative hearing for the bill at the state Capitol in Sacramento in April. The UCD chapter also has plans for other projects, including enrichment activities for dogs used as blood donors at the school and developing an information piece on animal overpopulation issues to share with other students.

Some thoughts from the AVAR student chapter members who participated in the Mexican Spay Camp:

“I have been pleasantly overwhelmed by the tremendous student interest in volunteering at the Spay Camp. I am thrilled to find that so many of my classmates are willing to volunteer their time and expertise and have such a sincere desire to make a difference for the animals. I think students who volunteer at these camps not only benefit from a wide variety of practical experience (such as physical exams, anesthesia induction, surgical prep, etc.), but also find themselves rewarded just knowing their knowledge and skills are being utilized in such a positive, meaningful way.”

Christi Payne, Spay Camp coordinator
UC Davis Class of 2007

“Teresa Plagman
UC Davis Class of 2007

The project in Mexico provided medical treatment that included deworming vaccines, antibiotics for infections, parasite preventative treatment, as well as spay and neuter services. Although these same services are provided to veterinary patients worldwide, I definitely felt different at the end of our work day in Juarez. I felt a sense of happiness and a rewarding feeling that came with helping those patients who needed it most.”

AVAR Representative Addresses Use of Animals in Education at Iowa State University Symposium

Dr. Susan Krebsbach, editor of the Alternatives in Veterinary Medical Education newsletter, gave an invited presentation on the use of animals in education at the Iowa State University (ISU) Spring 2004 Bioethics Symposium in March. The audience included faculty and students from ISU’s Life Sciences department and College of Veterinary Medicine, ISU researchers and graduate students, and other interested faculty, staff, and students.

The symposium focused on the ethical and legal issues involved in the use of animals in teaching and research. The subject was prompted by current interest in federal legislation regulating the ways in which researchers and teachers can employ animals, including protections that are intended to protect the interests of animals while also protecting the right of researchers and teachers to train the next generation of research scientists, veterinarians, and physicians. The subject matter was very timely considering that many schools are currently evaluating the regulations that govern animal use, evaluating existing practices in light of these regulations and considering the available alternatives to animal use.

Dr. Krebsbach’s presentation concentrated on the use of animals in veterinary education and the available alternatives to harming and killing them. She reviewed the numbers and use of animals in veterinary instruction, using data that was collected from an AVAR survey (Educational Use of Nonhuman Animals in Veterinary Medical Schools for the 1998–1999 School Year). In addition, Krebsbach discussed whether the harmful use of animals in veterinary education is necessary, the types of alternatives that exist, and the broader impact of alternatives and humane education.

Dr. Krebsbach’s presentation also included an update on the recent USDA citations against veterinary schools that was prompted by an AVAR petition.