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ALTERNATIVES IN VETERINARY MEDICAL EDUCATION



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Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights

U. Penn Vet School Ends Terminal Surgeries in Small Animal Curriculum

The University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine (U. Penn) has eliminated the last remaining small animal terminal surgical procedure for its students, making it the third veterinary medical school in North America to eliminate terminal surgeries from both their core and elective small animal courses.

Third year veterinary students previously had the option of taking the surgical laboratory course that resulted in an average of 40 dogs and 20 cats killed per year. Through the guidance of Dr. Dorothy Brown, assistant professor of surgery and a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, who recently took over teaching the course, this is no longer the case. Thanks to Dr. Brown's efforts, U. Penn students who take the Small Animal Anesthesia and Surgery Elective no longer kill their patients. Based

on her surveys of past students, Dr. Brown restructured the course to emphasize "the more common and useful soft tissue procedures."

Each student recovers one dog after performing an intestinal resection and anastomosis, liver biopsy, and castration and one cat after performing a cystotomy, splenectomy, and castration. In addition, each student spays one dog from the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). These animals are then available for adoption either through the veterinary school or the SPCA. According to Dr. Brown, "Improving the course for students and animals alike was my goal. My impression is that the students found the course to be a valuable learning experience. All of the dogs and cats used in the course were ultimately adopted."

U. Penn has joined the growing list of veterinary schools that are eliminating terminal procedures from their curriculum. The AVAR commends Dr. Brown and the University of Pennsylvania for their progressive steps in making their curriculum more humane and focusing on students' needs while at the same time enhancing the learning process.

Editor's note: The AVAR does not support educational procedures that are harmful or fatal to animals, including surgeries that are unnecessary for the health of the animal or do not benefit the overpopulation problem. We do commend U. Penn for finding a means of eliminating killing and hope that eventually actual patients who benefit from the surgeries or some other alternative will replace unnecessary procedures.

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