

Legislative Update: You Can't Make A Play If You Are Sitting On The Bench

The ISVMA legislative strategy for the next few years will be very proactive. While other organizations try to define themselves in the press as the advocates for animals, the ISVMA will be actively working on legislation and developing relationships in the Illinois State Capitol that will demonstrate to lawmakers that veterinarians are, and have been for more than a century, the real experts on animal health and welfare. In other words, ISVMA will be very proactive and we will rely more heavily upon the participation of veterinarians in our grassroots political network.

During the ISVMA Annual Convention, Dr. Steve Dullard, ISVMA Legislative Committee Chairman, and ISVMA Executive Director Peter Weber will conduct a Legislative Symposium. If you are interested in learning about the ISVMA legislative strategies, commenting on current issues, learning about the very real threat of non-veterinary organizations lobbying efforts on animal-related issues, and finding out how you can help then plan to join us at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 8.

Participants in the Legislative Symposium will also be asked to provide feedback on specific amendments to the Veterinary Practice Act that ISVMA is considering. Your input and thoughtful consideration will inform our future decisions and help shape our policy positions.

Online Database Checks Economic Health of U.S. Veterinary Practices

The National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues wants to know how veterinary practices are faring in these troubled economic times, and you can help.

The NCVEI is asking U.S. practices to provide a snapshot of their financial health by using the new Economy Tracker Tool on the NCVEI Web site (www.ncvei.org). By obtaining ongoing monthly revenue and transactions that began in January 2007, the commission hopes to get a sense of how U.S. veterinary practices are doing in 2008 compared with 2007.

"What we're trying to do is get a feel for whether revenue is changing due to the troubled economy, and less people are coming in or they're spending less," explained Dr. Karen E. Felsted, NCVEI chief executive officer.

The commission began collecting data in September. So far, data indicate revenue for U.S. veterinary practices grew an average of about 5 percent in July 2008 compared with July 2007 but dropped to less than 1 percent growth from August 2007 compared with August 2008, according to Dr. Felsted. Fewer clients were visiting veterinarians, she added, but they aren't decreasing how much they spend when they do visit.

There isn't enough information yet to break down results according to practice size, region, and the like, but Dr. Felsted hopes enough data will be collected to do so, once word of the Economy Tracker Tool gets out.

The tool is the only mechanism collecting real-time data of veterinary practices, Dr. Felsted, and is easy to use.

The NCVEI tools are available free of charge to members of the AVMA or American Animal Hospital Association.

New Web Site Gathers Pesticide Incidents Involving Animals

The National Pesticide Information Center has developed a Web site for veterinarians to report pesticide incidents involving animals.

The Web site is for the use of veterinarians only. It can be accessed at http://www.avma.org/animal_health/reporting_adverse_events.asp. The reporting site was

developed by the NPIC with input from the AVMA Clinical Practitioners Advisory Committee and the AVMA Council on Biologic and Therapeutic Agents.

The site was designed to capture the optimal amount of relevant information while providing a form that is quick for busy practitioners to fill out. Several pieces of information are required, the most important of which is identification of the pesticide product, preferably by the Environmental Protection Agency registration number located on the label. If the registration number is not available, the veterinarian may enter the product name and active ingredient.

The data will be evaluated by the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs. Most of the reports of more severe pesticide-induced incidents the agency receives are neurologic or dermatologic in nature. The reports vary in quality and in information reported. It is expected that reports received from veterinarians will help to better characterize the incident reports presently received by the EPA.

Reports generated from this new data base will also be provided to the AVMA.

AVMA Survey Shows Veterinarians Really Like Their Jobs

(AVMA - Schaumburg, Ill.) October 29, 2008—There is no way of knowing how many little boys and girls dream of growing up to be veterinarians ... but it's a whole lot. A recent survey of the profession shows that kids have got it right, veterinarians love their jobs.

The 2007 Member Needs Assessment, conducted by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), surveyed members regarding job satisfaction and happiness. That data was then compared to existing job satisfaction data taken from a study published by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago in 2007. That comparison revealed that veterinarians have a very high level of job satisfaction (3.55), just behind Clergy (3.79), teachers (3.61) and psychologists (3.59), but above physicians (3.47) and lawyers (3.33). The average rating in the NORC study for all jobs was 3.30, which makes veterinarians well above average.

"To state it as simply as possible, I'd say that veterinarians just like their jobs," explained Dr. Robert A. Dietl, chair of the AVMA Membership Services Committee. "Veterinary medicine is very diversified, so there are many opportunities to find your niche. If I got out of veterinary school and tried large animal medicine out in the country and I didn't like it, I could try small animal veterinary medicine, or research, academia or I could go into corporate medicine. There are a lot of opportunities in veterinary medicine, so you don't get pigeonholed in a career you don't enjoy."

"There is a great deal of innate integrity in the profession," explains Dr. Charles M. Hendrix, former AVMA vice president and former chair of the AVMA Wellness Committee. "Studies have shown that veterinarians are highly respected by the communities they serve. People like us a lot, and that can make you happy."

Another interesting detail to come out of the AVMA study is that the veterinarians with the highest job satisfaction are food animal veterinarians (3.69). In fact, when compared with the rankings in the NORC study, farm veterinarians ranked third in job satisfaction, just below the clergy and physical therapists, while companion animal veterinarians scored a 3.52 job satisfaction rating. This high level of satisfaction is interesting because there is a growing shortage of food animal veterinarians, in spite of efforts to recruit more students in that practice area.

"I've always thought that the best way to attract young veterinarians into the field of food animal veterinary medicine is to simply expose them to the joys and satisfaction of this type of work," explained Dr. James Cook, AVMA president, who works on farm animals in his practice. "I know that it's incredibly rewarding and that's why the job satisfaction numbers are so high."

The AVMA survey also revealed that veterinarians are also a fairly happy group, although their ranking dropped slightly when compared to the NORC study. The profession's happiness score of 2.30 was below that of lawyers (2.37) and physicians (2.39). Average happiness for all jobs on the NORC study was 2.23, meaning that, at 2.30 veterinarians were happier than most people.

Dr. Dietl explains that one of the reasons veterinarians may report that they are less happy than they are satisfied with their jobs may be their income. Veterinarians are not as highly paid as physicians or lawyers.

"I think economics are a major factor. With the economy as it is today, I think veterinarians would probably report they weren't as happy today as they were last year," Dr. Dietl explains. "The rising cost of education makes it even more of a struggle for young veterinarians. I graduated in 1966 with little to no debt, but today students graduate on average \$120,000 in debt. So if we want veterinarians to be happier, we need to do something to improve the economic viability of the profession."

AVMA research also shows that very few veterinarians choose to leave the profession. The AVMA, which represents 85 percent of all U.S. veterinarians, conducts exit surveys for members who decide not to continue as part of the Association. For the veterinarians who tell the association why they're leaving, the most common reason cited is retirement—22.6 percent in 2008. The least common reason, "No longer employed in a field of veterinary medicine," which indicates they might have chosen to leave the profession, drew only 6.1 percent of the comments.

For more information, please visit www.avma.org.

Emergency Backup System for Veterinary Records in Development

An ISVMA member is developing an emergency records management system to protect your records from fires, floods, storms and anything else that might destroy them. He wishes to assess the willingness of primary care veterinarians to use this type of system. You can learn more about the system by visiting www.emergencypetrecords.com.

The website includes a link to a [survey](#). Your input on this survey will help determine whether there is sufficient interest for this type of system from private practice veterinarians.

AVMA Releases Podcast on Canine Aggression Toward Children

Half of the approximately 800,000 people in the United States who are bitten by dogs each year are children. Canine aggression toward children is the subject of the latest episode of AVMA Animal Tracks, the weekly podcast series for pet owners.

Dr. Ilana Reisner, assistant professor of behavioral medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, discusses why children are so disproportionately the victims of dog bites, and how adults can help protect their children through training and education.

Animal Tracks was launched in May with a podcast featuring Dr. Kimberly May, assistant director of professional and public affairs in the AVMA Communications Division, talking about pet safety tips for the summer. The series has gone on to feature AVMA members and staff discussing issues such as disaster preparedness, aggression between dogs in the home, feline immunodeficiency virus, and hospice care.

AVMA Animal Tracks is available to download from an RSS feed on the AVMA Web site at www.avma.org/news/info_rss.asp. The podcasts are also accessible through Apple's iTunes. Those with iTunes, which can be downloaded free at www.apple.com/itunes/overview, can subscribe to AVMA Animal Tracks and receive new episodes as soon as they become available through a portable media player such as an iPod.

About the Photo

The [American Kestrel](#) (*Falco sparverius*) is the smallest falcon in North America — about the size of an American Robin. This bird was (and sometimes still is) colloquially known in North America as the "Sparrow Hawk".

American Kestrels are widely distributed across the Americas. Their breeding range extends from central and western Alaska across northern Canada to Nova Scotia, and south throughout North America, into central Mexico, the Baja, and the Caribbean. They are local breeders in Central America and are widely distributed throughout South America.

The American Kestrel's North American population has been estimated at 1.2 million pairs, with the Central and South American populations being as large. It is possible that the clearing of parts of North America for agriculture in the last two hundred years has caused the American kestrel population to increase. The southeastern race, *Falco sparverius paulus*, is in serious decline (an 82 percent decrease since the early 1940s in north central Florida) possibly due to habitat loss and loss of nest sites, and has been listed in Florida as "threatened."

Most of the birds breeding in Canada and the northern United States migrate south in the winter, although some males stay as year-round residents. It is a very rare vagrant to western Europe.

American Kestrels are found in a variety of habitats including parks, suburbs, open fields, forest edges and openings, alpine zones, grasslands, marshes, open areas on mountainsides, prairies, plains, deserts with giant cacti, and freeway and highway corridors. The birds characteristically hunt along roadsides from telephone wires, fence posts, trees or other convenient perches when not flying in search of food.

The American Kestrel is the only North American falcon to habitually hover with rapid wing beats, keeping its head motionless while scanning the ground for prey. Although hover-hunting is conspicuous, this foraging method actually is used rather infrequently. It is used most often when suitable perches are not available, or when winds are strong enough to create updrafts favorable to hovering. The kestrel commonly perches along fences and power lines. It glides with flat wings and wingtips curved upward. It occasionally soars in circles with its tail spread and its wings flat.

In summer, kestrels feed largely on grasshoppers, dragonflies, lizards, mice, and voles. They will also eat other small birds. Wintering birds feed primarily on rodents and birds.

This falcon species is not long-lived. The oldest banded wild bird was 11 years and seven months old while a captive lived 17 years. The primary causes of death include collision with traffic, illegal shooting, and predation by other raptors (including the Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Cooper's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Barn Owl, and Great Horned Owl).

I photographed this American Kestrel near Rochester, IL in April 2006.

Contact Us

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