

Florida VETERINARIAN

ADVANCING ANIMAL HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

UF | College of Veterinary Medicine

Cat whisper-er in demand for skills in veterinary behavior

By Sarah Carey

Veterinary behaviorist Dr. Terry Curtis, '97, lectures all over the country and abroad about predictable pet behavioral dilemmas: dog and cat aggression, thunderstorm phobias, separation anxiety.

But the call she received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, requesting a consult at the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum — a well-known tourist stop in Key West and home to as many as 60 polydactyl cats descending from the late author's pet cat colony — was nothing she could have anticipated.

Word leaked out that Curtis had been invited to visit the site and assess the situation, which involved a dispute between the USDA and the site owners as to whether the house was in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act.

Suddenly the national media was all over the story. Reporters clamored for interviews with "the cat whisper-er." Curtis appeared on ABC's Nightline news show. She received a brief mention in People Magazine. She's still getting calls about what she found at the site and her recommended solution — but the whisper-er's staying mum.



Dr. Terry Curtis with her tabby cat, Molly.

You can't blame reporters for asking. Many people don't have a good understanding of what a veterinary behaviorist does, how they work and how they differ from others who call themselves animal behaviorists.

"Don't forget to put the 'veterinary' in front of it when you talk about me," said Curtis, one of only 42 board-certified veterinary animal behaviorists in the country, according to the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. "There are credentials associated with a veterinary behaviorist; a few more years of school and many globs of sweat are attached."

The Niagara Falls, N.Y. native, now a clinical instructor at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine, has always carved her own path.

She worked as a research technologist with Exxon Chemical Company and as an environmental specialist with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and with a private consulting firm.

But the work was not fulfilling.

"I definitely was not one who always wanted to be a vet," Curtis said. "For me, it was about what career was going to work for me as an adult. I wanted to be in a profession where I had autonomy, flexibility and variety. I was either going to open my own environmental consulting firm, or go back to school."

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“The biggest thing for me is having owners understand why their animal is doing what it's doing.”

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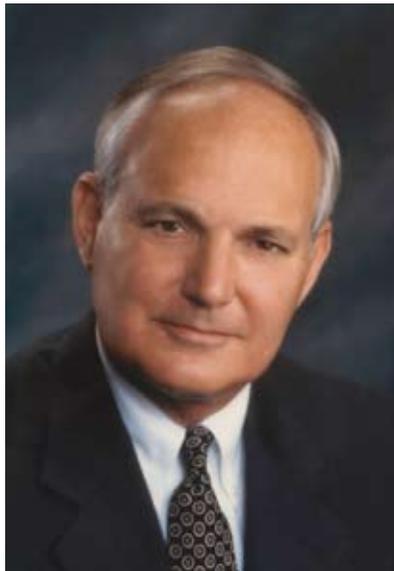
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Dean Glen Hoffsis

The formal kickoff of the public phase of the university's \$1.5 billion capital campaign, Florida Tomorrow, slated for completion in fall 2012, was Sept. 28.

As part of the University of Florida's overall fundraising goal, the UF College of Veterinary Medicine has announced its official goal of \$40 million to be reached within that five-year period.

What is Florida Tomorrow? Here at the college, it's our pledge to support the community, faculty, students and animals. It's our commitment to care for animals, here on campus and throughout the state of Florida and the Southeast United States. And it's our promise to future generations to foster tomorrow's next great veterinarians.

At the College of Veterinary Medicine, we believe that Florida Tomorrow is a place where medical discoveries solve animal, human and environment problems. The campaign will be crucial in building the strength needed

to meet the needs of Florida and the nation.

Florida Tomorrow is pioneering research and spirited academic programs. It's a fertile environment for inquiry, teaching and learning. It's being at the forefront to address the challenges facing all of us, both today and tomorrow.

We hope all of you will keep the future of our college in mind as we progress through the years ahead. You understand that the shortfall in state revenues has seriously eroded our college budget, making us less dependent on the state.

The state portion of our college's budget is about \$17 million, while our total budget is about \$57 million. This means that most of the programs and services provided by the college are funded from sources other than the state of Florida. These other sources include student tuition, hospital income, research grants, contracts, gifts, and endowments. One of the most critical and valuable of these sources are the endowments. The most distinguished veterinary colleges in the country are characterized by sizable endowments that support professors, students, research, and facilities.

Endowments enable us to provide state of the art clinical services and the infrastructure needed to sustain a vibrant research enterprise. Our college desperately needs more endowed chairs and professorships. A position like this is created with a gift which qualifies for a state match. The combined total is then invested in the UF Foundation and annual income is used to pay the salary of a distinguished professor. The awesome aspect of this is that it lasts in perpetuity. When one named professor retires, another one is recruited into the position. This allows the college to name an existing professor to the position or to recruit a professor to UF. Either way, the college has a mechanism of attracting and retaining distinguished faculty, which is crucial to ensure the advancement we all desire.

I want to thank all of you for the support you give the college in so many ways and hope you will participate in the Florida Tomorrow Campaign to the greatest extent possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glen".

Glen Hoffsis
Dean

UF toxicology lab to assess effects of pollutants on sharks

By Meredith Woods

Sending commonly prescribed medications down the drain may be taking a bite out of the environment — at least when it comes to shark habitat, University of Florida veterinary scientists say. In fact, the combination of flushing unused medications and the natural excretion of drug residue from antidepressants, cholesterol-regulating drugs and contraceptives into wastewater systems could be having repercussions on aquatic animal life in general.

Researchers at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine's Analytical Toxicology Core Laboratory, in collaboration with Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, are studying the bull shark's exposure to pharmaceutical drug residue found in the waters of the Caloosahatchee River near Fort Myers. Bull sharks leave the ocean to spend time in brackish rivers and estuaries, and the river serves as a nursery for their young.

"Because bull sharks have the unique ability to survive in both saltwater and freshwater environments, they are in close, frequent contact with people — and, as a result, are frequently exposed to wastewater pollutants found in freshwater basins," said Jim Gelsleichter, senior scientist at Mote Marine Laboratory.

Scientists are trying to determine whether exposure to prescription residue contaminants from water treatment plants and other sources affects the sharks' ability to grow and reproduce.

"Treatment plants were designed to remove pathogens like viruses and bacterial agents, and that they do very well," said Nancy Szabo, Ph.D. Gelsleichter's co-investigator and director of UF's



Dr. Nancy Szabo

Analytical Toxicology Core Laboratory. But these facilities simply aren't designed to deal with pharmaceuticals, she said.

Evidence suggests that low-level pharmaceutical pollution is widespread. In 1999 and 2000, the U.S. Geological Survey sampled 139 streams in 30 states for organic wastewater contaminants, including common pharmaceuticals. Eighty percent of the streams



Mote senior biologist John Tyminski tags a bull shark while Mote intern Lisa Arneson, left, and Principal Investigator Dr. Jim Gelsleichter, right, hold the animal. Mote interns Christelle Abadia, rear left, and Kristina Knight, rear right, record data and observe the tagging process. All interns are supported by Mote's NSF-funded Research Experiences for Undergraduates Program.

studied contained traces of chemical pollution. The consequences of such contamination are not yet fully known, although some research has shown even low levels of these contaminants affect several fish species.

Federal guidelines for proper disposal of prescription drugs recommend flushing them down the toilet only if the accompanying patient information specifically says it is safe to do so.

Gelsleichter is testing for the presence and levels of human drug contaminants in bull shark blood by tagging bull sharks in the river basin with passive sampling devices — silicone rubber discs that collect chemical samples in the water for later examination. When sharks are caught by local anglers or by the Mote team on subsequent research expeditions, the tags are retrieved and sent to UF's Analytical Toxicology Core Laboratory for analysis.

When the blood and silicone-rubber discs from the bull sharks arrive at the laboratory, Szabo's team analyzes the samples to determine the variety and concentration of chemicals present in the bull shark's environment.

The UF laboratory specializes in non-routine analysis. Szabo's team works with researchers both at UF and elsewhere to develop appropriate methods for measuring and analyzing whatever toxins are being

examined. These techniques are tailored specifically to each client.

For the bull shark study, the UF laboratory has been able to use distinctive techniques to gauge chemical levels in bull shark blood. The laboratory worked with Mote not only to design the experiment but also to adapt the analytical methods used to ensure valid results are produced.

"The type of work we do requires a lot of effort, and one has to have the expertise available to know where to even begin," Szabo said.

The bull shark study, which is funded through September 2008 by the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program and a federal grant to the National Shark Research Foundation, is the most recent collaboration between the UF laboratory and Mote. The two groups have worked together for the past nine years.

"Our collaborative efforts have provided new data on the environmental quality of essential fish habitat for the U.S. shark populations," Gelsleichter added. "This information is necessary for NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) fisheries to have so they can manage and conserve these populations from an ecosystem perspective." ■

Aquatic Animal Health program thrives, but hopes to survive

By Sarah Carey

The University of Florida's Aquatic Animal Health program was significantly enhanced in 2000 with an \$810,000 state grant shared with the Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience in St. Augustine. This funding is part of a larger state program that supports the rescue and rehabilitation of Florida's imperiled manatee population at Sea World Orlando, Miami Seaquarium, and Lowry Park Zoo.

The funding allowed UF to establish a unique training program in marine mammal health that complemented existing programs in fisheries and aquaculture.

"We have been able to provide support to our colleagues in various state agencies and to unify previously disparate programs within other departments and colleges," said Ruth Francis-Floyd, D.V.M., the program's director.

Eleanor Green, D.V.M., chair of the UF College of Veterinary Medicine's department of large animal clinical sciences and chief of staff of UF's large animal hospital, called the program "one of the most exciting on campus" and said it adds an important dimension to her department, which is where the program has its academic home.

"This program is important to the State of Florida, its fragile ecosystem, and its people," Green said. "It would be impossible to measure the positive return on the state's investment due to the expansiveness of its impact, such as on its multitude of freshwater lakes, miles of coastline, unique and endangered aquatic animal species, agribusiness, tourism, and much more."

The program covers everything from shellfish and other invertebrates, typically clams, shrimp and ornamental coral, through fish, including both aquarium-type fish and aquaculture (fish farming) operations, added Charles Courtney, D.V.M., Ph.D., associate dean of research and graduate studies at the veterinary college, in which the university wide program is centered. "Our zoo medicine faculty and graduate students are heavily involved in sea turtles and alligators, so we're also doing the large reptiles, both clinically and in research."

Collaborations with state and federal agencies, as well as private zoological parks such as the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, Sea World and Disney's Animal Kingdom, have been strengthened through UF's veterinary and scientific expertise in private collections and wildlife rehabilitation. The first-ever clinical resident at UF specializing in aquatic animal medicine finished her program in July.

In August, veterinary college faculty approved a certificate program for professional DVM students who wish to gain experience in the area of aquatic animal health.

The program also helps fund research ranging from very basic science to applied questions, such as how fast a boat has to be going before it will damage a manatee on impact — information which could provide information used to set boat speeds, Courtney said. Continuing education and consultation is available to biologists, veterinarians, and wildlife rehabilitation professionals throughout the country and internationally.

But the recurring funds that have made the AAH program possible may soon be on the chopping block, vulnerable to budget cuts at a time when all state agencies have been asked to trim their budgets from 4-10 percent due to Florida's sagging economy.

"While supplemented by many more grants and contracts we bring in ourselves, the state grant has allowed the college to build a stable and strong marine mammal program and strengthen longtime programs in fisheries and aquaculture," Courtney said. "The funds we receive are leveraged many times over."

In August, Mike Walsh, D.V.M., formerly head veterinarian at Sea World of Florida, joined the UF team as associate program director. His 21 years in marine animal medicine have been hallmarked by innovation and improvement in the care of manatees, pinnipeds, penguins, dolphins, whales, sea turtles, sharks

and beached whales and dolphins.

"I joined this program because of its past strengths, its current level of expertise and the obvious future commitment it will make to Florida's valuable wild aquatic animal species, the fish industry, the Oceanaria, FWC and the National Marine Fisheries," Walsh said. "These are unique and productive partnerships and the general public has no idea of the many accomplishments on their behalf."

Walsh also has contributed to the internationalization of Florida's aquatic animal medicine program with previous training for and assistance to programs in Taiwan, Canada, Holland, Argentina, and South America.

"There may be programs around the world that are stronger than we are in one particular area, but I'm fairly certain that no one has the broad strength and completeness that we have," Courtney said.



Dr. Mike Walsh, UF's new associate director of the Aquatic Animal Health Program, helps position a rehabilitated stranded dolphin for chest radiographs at Clearwater Marine Science Center. Taking the radiographs (not shown in photo) was Dr. Michael Porter, who directs the College of Veterinary Medicine's Mobile Equine Diagnostic Service. Porter took the MEDS truck to Clearwater to be of service when assistance was needed.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Mike Walsh

Alumni affairs coordinator named at UF veterinary college

Jo Ann Winn has been named alumni affairs coordinator at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine.

For the past five years, Winn has worked as a program assistant in charge of coordinating college events. Winn will continue to handle

those duties but now will also coordinate activities specifically related to alumni. She also will head up the Pet Memorial Program, a means through which alumni and friends can make a donation in memory of a client or friend's pet when the pet dies, and the alumni council's Distinguished Awards Program.

She began her official duties in April. Among her current projects is implementing a new student ambassador program to encourage greater student involvement with alumni, donors and friends of the college.

Winn holds a bachelor's degree in public relations from UF.



Jo Ann Winn

Infectious disease specialist awarded professorship

Anthony Barbet, Ph.D., an infectious disease specialist at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, has received a UF Research Foundation professorship.

The professorships are awarded through the university's Division of Sponsored Research to tenured faculty members campuswide for distinguished research and scholarship. The honor includes a \$5,000 salary increase each year for three years and a one-time \$3,000 award for research support.

Barbet, a professor in the UF veterinary college's department of infectious diseases and pathology, specializes in tick-borne rickettsial diseases, a growing threat to human health.



Dr. Anthony Barbet

Such diseases occur worldwide, but are most common in temperate and subtropical regions. Barbet and his colleagues at the UF veterinary college have long studied the animal variations of many of these diseases, specifically anaplasmosis and ehrlichiosis.

While perhaps best known for their decades of research into heartwater, a devastating disease that affects cattle and other livestock, UF's team also has significantly contributed to the understanding of other rickettsial organisms in the same family. Barbet is currently focusing on understanding why these diseases are now spreading from animals to humans and how they persist in the environment. The research also involves developing new molecular approaches that may be applied to pinpoint and control both human and animal infections.

Barbet has been a member of UF's veterinary college faculty since 1986.

Graduate student receives fellowship

Pablo Pinedo, a graduate student in the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, has received the Richard Merkal Memorial Fellowship to attend the International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis, to be held Oct. 29-Nov. 2 in Tsukuba, Japan.

Pinedo is pursuing his Ph.D. under the supervision of Owen Rae, D.V.M., a professor in the department of large animal clinical sciences. Pinedo's travel and registration costs will be covered through the fellowship, which is sponsored by International Association for Paratuberculosis and is only awarded to two individuals. While at the event, Pinedo will give a presentation on his research, which focuses on genetic resistance to paratuberculosis, also known as Johne's Disease, in beef and dairy cattle.

Paratuberculosis is a chronic, debilitating disease of ruminants characterized by progressive weight loss and profuse diarrhea. The disease resembles Crohn's disease in humans and produces high losses for the animal industry in the United States.



Pablo Pinedo

Student's poster presentation to be featured at NIH research festival

The research findings of University of Florida veterinary graduate student Shasta McClenahan will be featured in a poster presentation slated for the second annual National Institutes of Health-sponsored National Graduate Student Research Festival, to be held Oct. 11-12 in Bethesda, Md.

McClenahan's research involves the isolation and characterization of caliciviruses from marine mammals. Caliciviruses can cause blisters on the flippers and in the mouths of marine mammals, and have caused spontaneous abortions in pregnant animals.

"These marine caliciviruses are unique in that they can move from the ocean into the terrestrial environment, where they infect many other animal species, livestock and even humans," McClenahan said.

Her project began as a collaboration with Alaska Veterinary Pathology Services and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, which are investigating the declines in the Steller sea lion population in Alaska.

The event will be held at the NIH's main campus. One of the festival's goals is to help graduate students meet NIH investigators with whom they may wish to pursue postdoctoral training.

"Several hundred students from all over the country applied for this privilege, and those selected represent the 'creme-de-la-creme' of our future scientists," said Carlos Romero, Ph.D., a scientist in the department of infectious diseases and pathology at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine and McClenahan's graduate program supervisor.



Shasta McClenahan

Former Sea World vet hired to help run aquatic health program

Mike Walsh, D.V.M., a former head veterinarian at Sea World of Florida, has joined the administrative staff at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, where he now serves as associate director of UF's Aquatic Animal Health program.



Dr. Mike Walsh

He will work directly under program director Ruth Francis-Floyd, D.V.M., a longtime fisheries and aquaculture specialist.

Although programs in aquaculture and fisheries existed for years across different colleges and departments at UF, an \$810,000 state grant funded in 2000 — shared between the college and the Whitney Marine Laboratory — has greatly expanded the university's teaching, clinical and research expertise in the area of marine mammal medicine.

Walsh's 21 years in that discipline have been marked by innovation and improvement in the care of manatees, seals and sea lions, penguins, dolphins, whales, sea turtles and sharks as well as beached whales and dolphins.

"I joined this program because of its past strengths, its current level of expertise and the obvious future commitment it will make to Florida's valuable wild aquatic animal species, the fish industry, the Oceanaria, Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the National Marine Fisheries Service," Walsh said. "These are unique and productive partnerships and the general public has no idea of the many accomplishments on their behalf."

Walsh also has contributed to the internationalization of Florida's aquatic animal medicine program by providing training and other assistance to organizations in Taiwan, Canada, Holland, Argentina and South America. New associations with Clearwater Marine Science Center and Georgia Aquarium will offer clinical residents even more hands-on exposure to state-of-the-art marine animal medicine.

Interim dean of students appointed

Thomas W. Vickroy, Ph.D., a pharmacology professor and longtime University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine faculty member, has been named interim associate dean for students and instruction at the college.

Vickroy's appointment came after a national search to fill the position was terminated in August due to a universitywide hiring freeze.

A neuropharmacology professor in the college's department of physiological sciences, Vickroy teaches veterinary pharmacology and small and large animal clinical pharmacology to professional (D.V.M.) students. He also lectures on cellular neurophysiology, molecular and cellular neurobiology, mammalian pharmacology and advanced toxicology, among other topics, to graduate students in the veterinary college and with UF's College of Medicine.

Vickroy has won numerous awards for teaching excellence since he joined the UF veterinary faculty in 1988, including recognition of his contributions in the forensic science program with the National Award for Excellence in College and University Distance Education in 2006. This program is offered through the graduate schools of both the veterinary college and UF's College of Pharmacy. Other professional teaching honors include the College of Veterinary Medicine Clinical Sciences Teacher of the Year in 2003-04 and Class of 1996 Teacher of the Year.

Vickroy's appointment was effective Sept. 1. His predecessor in the position, James P. Thompson, D.V.M., Ph.D., had served since 1996. Soon after the present dean, Glen Hoffsis, D.V.M., was hired, Thompson was promoted to executive associate dean. Since that time, he has performed duties associated with both positions.

"I would like to thank Dr. Thompson for his intense commitment to the college during this period of transition and I understand the importance of the associate dean position to the college and our programs," Hoffsis said. "I have full confidence in Dr. Vickroy and his ability to perform the responsibilities associated with this job."



Dr. Thomas Vickroy

Faculty member honored for presentation

Dennis E. Brooks, D.V.M., Ph.D., a professor of ophthalmology at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, has been honored for his presentations during the 2007 Western Veterinary Conference, held in February in Las Vegas.

Conference attendees named Brooks a Continuing Educator of the Year in the category of equine medicine and surgery. Vision problems are the fourth most common health problem for horses, and dogs are second only to humans in incidence of glaucoma. Brooks has not only personally saved sight for many animals, his research has changed the standard of care other veterinarians provide for equine eye problems.

At UF, Brooks and his colleagues have performed more corneal transplants in horses than anyone in the world.



Dr. Dennis Brooks in his laboratory at the UF CVM.

Photo by Kristin Bartlett, UF News Bureau



Honor Roll of Donors for 2006-2007

THE COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Honor Roll of Donors for 2006-2007

The 2006-2007 University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine Honor Roll of Donors is a way of recognizing generous gifts to the college. The students, faculty and staff are most appreciative of this support. This year's honor roll includes names of all donors of \$25 or more between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007. Your name should appear in alphabetical order among donors who made gifts of similar amounts. Many alumni choose to make gifts to the college in the name of their veterinary practice and the practice name is listed. We have included a list of Bequest Society members from the College of Veterinary Medicine. These members have included the college in their estate planning at a value of \$10,000 or more. In spite of our efforts, omissions and errors sometimes occur and we want to know to know about them. If you have questions or corrections concerning your listing, please contact the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, College of Veterinary Medicine, PO Box 100125, Gainesville, FL 32610-0125, (352) 392-2213 ext 5200.

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Student combines veterinary medicine and public health for career in infectious disease research

By Jill Pease

When Tara Anderson, D.V.M., graduated from the UF College of Veterinary Medicine in 2003, she decided to work at a small animal hospital first to hone her medical skills.

She liked working with patients, too, save the occasional biter and scratcher. But Anderson realized she wanted to focus her attention on helping animals and people in another way — through infectious disease research and public health.

She found an opportunity to do just that in the College of Veterinary Medicine's doctoral program and the College of Public Health and Health Professions' master's in public health program. As a doctoral student, Anderson has joined the UF team investigating the recently discovered canine influenza virus, and as a public health student, she expanded her knowledge of epidemiological research methods.

Anderson, who graduated with a master's degree in public health in August and expects to complete her doctorate in 2009, believes that veterinary medicine and public health are natural partners.

“Public health is a traditional component of the veterinary profession and is an important focus of its future,” Anderson said. “Although companion animal clinical practice and appreciation of the human-animal bond are very important, we need to highlight the vital roles veterinarians also play in public practice.”

Emerging infectious diseases such as SARS and H5N1 avian influenza are just two examples of zoonotic diseases — diseases that can spread from animals to humans — that have recently caused major public health crises. With expertise in wildlife and domestic animal health, veterinarians are instrumental in the research, prevention and control of these and many other public health threats, Anderson said.

Anderson is currently investigating the canine influenza virus under the direction of veterinary researchers Paul Gibbs, B.V.Sc., Ph.D., and Cynda Crawford, D.V.M., Ph.D. The UF team, along with collaborators at Cornell University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, announced the discovery of canine influenza three years ago when they confirmed that a form of equine influenza had jumped species to dogs. Cases of the respiratory infection have now been reported in dogs in 25 states and Washington D.C., with preliminary data showing a 16 percent infection rate. At this point there is no evidence that canine influenza is a zoonotic disease.

“Since canine influenza is so new, we look to the literature on equine, avian, swine and human influenza viruses for clues regarding potential mechanisms of transmission, viral pathogenesis, diagnosis and control,” Anderson said. “We are in the process of studying the epidemiology of canine influenza — trying to determine if there are any particular age groups or breeds of dogs that are more susceptible to the disease, and if there are hot spots for outbreaks, such as boarding kennels, shelters and dog day care centers. Hopefully as we learn more about canine influenza, we can contribute to the study of influenza viruses in other species as well.”



Photo by Sarah Keavel

Dr. Tara Anderson in the UF CVM laboratory where she regularly processes samples being tested for the presence of canine influenza virus.

Anderson has also been involved in the development of UF's new joint D.V.M./M.P.H. degree program. The program was launched this summer with 10 students currently enrolled.

Anderson is an excellent role model for students pursuing veterinary and public health training, said Nabih Asal, Ph.D., a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics in the College of Public Health and Health Professions.

“Tara is one of the most outstanding graduate students I have encountered in academia,” Asal said. “She has all the qualities needed for a successful career combining veterinary medicine and public health: high intellect, knowledge, curiosity, organizational and communication skills, training in veterinary medicine and epidemiology, and motivation.”

Veterinary student hopes national leadership role will advance “One Health” goals in profession

By Sarah Carey

University of Florida senior veterinary student Justin Sobota describes himself as “an average guy.” His manner — whether greeting colleagues, kidding around with fellow students, or checking in with his professors — is unquestionably humble.

However, Sobota’s resume, accomplishments and vision as the president of the national Student American Veterinary Medical Association make it clear the Pennsylvania native’s life and leadership contributions are anything but ordinary.

“I somewhat take the cowboy philosophy of not telling everyone who I really am,” Sobota said. “I’ve always been interested in politics and policy in veterinary medicine.”

In high school, Sobota was president of student government; in college, he presided over Pennsylvania State University’s academic assembly, an experience which helped solidify his desire to pursue veterinary medicine as a career. He also served as president of the pre-veterinary club at Penn State, where he received his bachelor’s degree in animal bioscience. In addition, Sobota holds master’s degrees in both animal science and animal nutrition and even worked as an equine nutrition consultant for a few companies prior to returning to UF as a veterinary student.

“When I came back to school, I didn’t feel I was providing society very much, which is one reason I wanted to become so involved in SAVMA,” Sobota said. “Just going through vet school wasn’t fulfilling. I have become much more goal oriented in many respects, and really wanted to be a part of the student AVMA and be a delegate and be a part of organized veterinary medicine.”

SAVMA is an 11,000 member organization which encompasses students from all over the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, Ireland and Australia. Sobota became the group’s president in March and will serve for one year. As president-elect, he served on numerous committees within the group and thought a lot about what he hoped to accomplish as SAVMA’s most visible officer.

“I and other executive committee members wanted to do something on a global scale,” Sobota said. “We teamed up with the Centers for



Justin Sobota is shown with U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson in Washington, D.C. this past summer.

Disease Control and the Alliance for Rabies control to promote World Rabies Day on Sept. 8.

“This opportunity enabled us to develop our SAVMA One Health Challenge Series, which is intended to drive home the message that the many components of the health profession — veterinary and human medicine, public health, veterinary technicians and nurses — are all part of one goal to improve health for everyone. All of these groups need to work together,” he added. “We can’t continue separating our professions to build one professional health organization.”

As it happens, SAVMA’s goal is concurrent with the American Veterinary Medical Association’s One Health initiative, which promotes essentially the same message: that the vision of one health will enhance the integration of animal, human and

environmental health for the benefit of all.

“We are two separate organizations (AVMA and SAVMA) but we are somewhat teaming with the AVMA on this approach,” Sobota said, adding that SAVMA already has reached out to medical students to enlist their support for the one health, one medicine concept.

While only 28 veterinary schools belong to SAVMA, many more medical and veterinary technical schools may soon become involved in the effort to expand public awareness about the importance of education about zoonotic diseases.

As SAVMA’s president, Sobota was named to the AVMA’s One Health Initiative Task Force in July. Sobota, the only veterinary student on the task force, will join 12 other members who will work to identify areas where animal and human medicine are already integrated and where integration is needed. The group also hopes to identify challenges or potential barriers to integration and to identify potential ways of overcoming those challenges.

Other goals SAVMA has put forth this year include encouraging veterinary students to contact their legislative representatives about legislative initiatives impacting the veterinary profession, and doing a better job of outreach — specifically getting the word out to fellow students about the availability of SAVMA scholarships and

Photo courtesy of Justin Sobota

providing “better public relations” to a variety of audiences about what veterinarians do.

“Our communications committee this year created a public relations DVD for pre-vet students as well as veterinary students, and copies have been delivered to all the schools,” Sobota said. “We need to do a better job of promoting our profession, even amongst ourselves.”

This past summer, Sobota worked for four weeks on Capital Hill in Washington, D.C. as part of the AVMA’s governmental relations division. The program provides a small group of veterinary students with the opportunity to participate in the legislative process as a way of promoting veterinary issues.

“I’m really thankful that my advisors and professors are supporting me by providing some flexibility in my schedule,” Sobota said. “Without that, it would be extremely difficult to do all of these outside activities.”

Large animal clinical sciences chair Eleanor Green, also chief of staff of UF’s Alec P. and Louise H. Courtelis Equine Hospital, called Sobota “clearly a leader among his student peers.” As Sobota’s faculty advisor and mentor, Green said she had interacted with him beyond

the formal classroom setting, discussing future goals and aspirations and even philosophies of life.

“Justin is precocious in his global view of the profession, with a mature approach to his own professional aspirations and how they integrate with the profession on a larger scale,” Green said. “His desire to contribute to the profession and to participate in organized veterinary medicine is sincere. He brings to the table experience with research, teaching, the animal industries, and veterinary technicians.”

Green added that Sobota had “an uncanny sense” of how to balance his professional and personal life.

“He has attained a level of comfort with the related choices he makes,” she said. “While he is a role model in the leadership arena, this balance he seeks and finds is also exemplary.”

Sobota encouraged all of his fellow students to participate in something bigger than themselves, whether a club, their state veterinary organization, or a specialist group.

“Life is more about how you accomplish something than what you’ve accomplished,” Sobota said. “It’s what you can provide, not the letters behind your name, that defines who you are.”

University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine

Distinguished Awards

Distinguished Awards nominations are due November 15, 2007

It’s that time again to nominate outstanding alumni, deserving veterinarians and those who have served the college and their profession in some special way.

We want your help to bring these deserving candidates to our attention for the Distinguished Awards program. The categories include:



Alumni Achievement Award – must be a UF CVM graduate

Distinguished Service Award – must hold a DVM or PhD*

Special Service Award – outstanding service to the UF CVM*

Young Alumni Award – alumni who graduated 10 years or less

**can be non UF alumni*

The nomination form is located on the CVM Alumni Affairs web site www.vetmed.ufl.edu/alumni and click on Distinguished Awards program. Mail completed nomination packets to UF College of Veterinary Medicine, Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, PO Box 100125, Gainesville, Florida 32610-0125. For more information, contact CVM.alumni.affairs@vetmed.ufl.edu or call 352-392-2213 x5200



continued from page 1

A positive externship experience with a veterinarian friend from Niagara Falls led Curtis to conclude that the veterinary profession could offer appealing additional lifestyle choices — and the opportunity to be her own boss.

“I figured, all I have is time, so I may as well do something I enjoy doing,” she said. “So I applied and got in.”

Curtis spent a brief period of time in private practice after veterinary school, and saw more animal behavior problems than she had ever anticipated.

“I really enjoyed the in-depth, one-on-one contact with the clients when there were behavior issues,” Curtis said. “So I started looking at how I could expand on that part of veterinary medicine and began checking out residencies around the country.”

At the time there were six veterinary behavior residencies in existence — UF still does not have such a program — but Curtis wound up pursuing hers at the University of Georgia. Along the way, she picked up a master’s degree in psychology, a tool she says helped her gain insight into how both people and animals learn.

“I just had a case referred to me where the cat hadn’t eaten on its own for over a year,” Curtis said. “The owner had to syringe feed it twice a day. So I came up with detailed treatment plan looking at the whole paradigm of learning and appetite. I had to get the cat hungry, present it with food it liked, in a form and in a place it liked. At first, I had no idea what I was going to do.”

But instincts and training served her well: Curtis recently got a call saying the cat had finally eaten on its own.

Today Curtis travels all over the state for client appointments, lectures widely and teaches a required introductory course in behavior to freshman veterinary students as well as an advanced elective clinical behavior course to juniors.

Curtis is excited about UF having recently established a student chapter of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behaviorist and will be working closely with the group.

“Having Dr. Curtis at our school is a great benefit and resource to the students,” said Beth Schoepner, an officer in UF’s student

chapter of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior. Only a handful of the 28 veterinary colleges in the country host student AVSAB chapters.

“I believe the class of 2007 was the first class at UF to graduate having been required to take a basic behavior class during their education,” she said. “Behavior is an integral part of the human animal bond and behavior problems are the number one reason for animals being relinquished and then euthanized at animal shelters. Without a behavior club, there really are few opportunities besides the courses offered at school to properly learn about animal behavior,” Curtis said.

She has no regrets about her chosen career path.

“The biggest thing for me is having owners understand why their animal is doing what it’s doing,” she said. “It’s the ‘aha’ moment when they realize their dog isn’t mad at them when they leave and he jumps out of the window, but that he’s actually in complete panic due to separation anxiety. Or that the dog that bites is fearful, not trying to be dominant.”

When clients “get it” — the why behind the pet’s behavior — the ability to save a life dramatically increases, said Curtis, a popular speaker not only at veterinary meetings but also at public events. Her goal is to educate as many people as possible about her role and “what can be done about proverbial dog chasing the car or the cat peeing outside of the box.”

In the overwhelmingly vast majority of cases, there is a solution, “even if it’s taking your cat that’s been spraying to the vet for boarding for a couple of weeks while you catch a breath, clean the carpet, or whatever.”

“People should know there’s a safety net and a plan in motion, and that someone’s going to help them through these problems so they can keep their dog or cat,” Curtis said.

In the end, success with her clients and their pets hinges on trust.

“When you go to someone’s home and talk to a client for two hours, they kind of expect an answer,” Curtis said. “Sure, I discuss things, but I have to walk out the door and develop a treatment plan. It takes a lot of faith on the part of the client for the process to work.”

Highlights from the Florida Tomorrow campaign kickoff banquet



Dr. Larry Dee, co-owner of Hollywood Animal Hospital and longtime college supporter, visits with Dr. Julio Ibanez, president of the college’s Alumni Council and a member of the Charter Class, and Dean Glen Hoffsis during the Florida Tomorrow campaign kickoff banquet, held Sept. 28 at UF’s Stephen C. O’Connell Center.



Longtime college supporters Jack and Linda Eads of Miami Beach were among the guests at the Florida Tomorrow campaign kickoff banquet, held Sept. 28 at UF’s Stephen C. O’Connell Center.



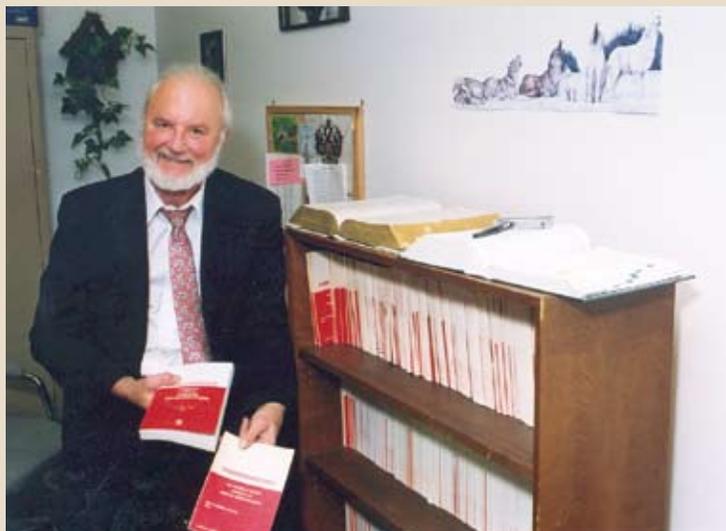
Dr. Carol Ash, Dr. Colin Burrows and Karolyn Godbey visit during a break at the Florida Tomorrow campaign kickoff banquet, held Sept. 28 at UF’s Stephen C. O’Connell Center.



Dr. Nick Bacon, assistant professor and surgeon with the Veterinary Medical Center’s oncology service, visits with Drs. Shirley Graves and Jerome Modell at the Florida Tomorrow campaign kickoff banquet, held Sept. 28 at UF’s Stephen C. O’Connell Center.

Photos by Sarah Carey

Pioneer of small animal reproduction dies



By Sarah Carey

The college and the world of theriogenology lost a friend when Dr. Victor Shille died Sept. 9 at the age of 74. His family lost a devoted husband and father.

Although Shille had technically retired from the UF College of Veterinary Medicine in 1993 — he had served as a professor of small animal theriogenology at UF since 1978 — he remained involved in college life and events.

He kept in close touch with Dr. Maarten Drost, a longtime friend and UF CVM colleague, and others with the Food Animal Reproduction and Medicine Service. He attended the dedication of Deriso Hall in 2006 and most recently, a meeting held by Dean Glen Hoffsis for professors emeriti of the college.

Many consider Shille the grandfather of the study of small animal reproduction.

Born in Yugoslavia to Russian parents, Shille spent his youth in Germany and grew up in Southern California, where his parents immigrated during World War II. He was fluent in Russian, German and English; could read Serbo-Croatian and could speak conversational Swedish and Spanish.

Shille received his D.V.M. from the University of California/Davis and then spent 14 years in a solo small animal practice prior to pursuing his Ph.D. His doctoral work focused on follicular development and ovulation in cats. He increased his international perspective by completing a postdoctoral program at the Swedish Agricultural College in Uppsala.

When he joined the UF veterinary college as a member of the founding faculty, he worked under the first dean, the late Dr. Charles Cornelius.

Shille had a prestigious career in academia, where he was widely acknowledged for his abilities in and devotion to teaching. He was UF's Norden Distinguished Professor in 1988 and was Teacher of the Year in 1991. He received the Bartlett Award from the American College of Theriogenologists in 1992 and was the recipient of the college alumni council's first-ever Distinguished Service Award in 2001.

Shille also served for nearly 25 years as chief editor of *Theriogenology*, an international journal of animal reproduction. Ten of those years were spent post-retirement, with Shille working quietly with his small staff of copy editors on the second floor of the Veterinary Academic Building.

Shille suffered from Parkinson's disease, which made his life and ability to use his considerable clinical skills increasingly difficult in recent years. In a farewell message printed in *Theriogenology*, he stated that he had retired twice from UF — the first time from clinical duties due to "Mr. Parkinson" because "trembling hands neither inspire confidence in a client nor do they make surgery possible." The second retirement was in 2003 from the journal because "Parkinsonism was advancing."

However, Shille never really retired, said his friend, Drost.

"He continued to help authors and graduate students who spoke languages other than English with their manuscripts," Drost said.

Over the past four years, Shille continued to present workshops of English for speakers of other languages with his wife, Patt. These workshops, focused on how to write a scientific paper, were presented contemporaneously with the annual conference of the International Embryo Transfer Society — which awarded him its Distinguished Service Award in 2006 — and were held in Quebec, Hungary, France, The Netherlands and China.

"Dr. Shille's philosophy was that language must not be a barrier to publication," Drost said. "The most difficult problem is not in grammar, punctuation or syntax, but in cultural differences in expression of ideas, he believed."

Cards may be sent to Patt Shille, 1807 NW 22nd Drive, Gainesville FL 32605.

At the family's request, memorial contributions may be sent to the National Parkinson Foundation or to "The Visual Guide to Feline Reproduction and the Visual Guide to Canine Reproduction," which will be dedicated to Shille and which will contain his collection of teaching slides. Go to: <http://drostproject.vetmed.ufl.edu>, on the home page under Support the Project click on University of Florida Foundation.

Jan 19-23

Jan. 19-23: The North American Veterinary Conference will be held in Orlando at the Marriott World Center and the Gaylord Palms Resort. The college's annual alumni reception will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 20 at the Marriott, room to be determined. For more information, contact Jo Ann Winn at (352) 392-2213, ext. 5013.

Feb 21-23

The UF Alumni Association's annual Back to College Weekend will take place at Emerson Hall on the UF campus. The College of Veterinary Medicine's presentation will be held Feb. 22 during the morning session and will feature the Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) performing a simulated animal rescue. The VETS team will also discuss how to rescue distressed animals in disaster situations. Contact Jo Ann Winn at (352) 392-2213, ext. 5013 for more information.

April 12

The annual CVM Open House will be held at the college from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact Sarah Carey at (352) 392-2213, ext. 5206 for more information.

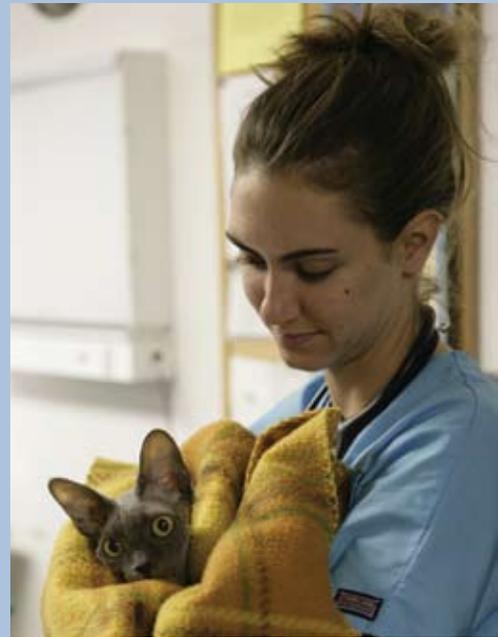


Photo by Ian Bradshaw

Oncology technician Samantha Haas is shown with a Rex cat in the small animal hospital recently.



Photo courtesy of CVM radiology service

An anesthetized horse's leg is imaged using the UF Veterinary Medical Center's new MRI unit.