

# Florida VETERINARIAN

ADVANCING ANIMAL HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

## UF | College of Veterinary Medicine

### College receives \$6 million, largest-ever gift from ranchers' estates

By Sarah Carey

“*Harriet and Robin made their decision because of their commitment to Florida agriculture and love of small animals, as well as their desire to help veterinary students through education and research.*”

The University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine has received approximately \$6 million from the estates of two South Florida cattle ranch owners, Harriet Weeks and her daughter, Robin Weeks.

The largest private gifts ever received by the college, the Weekses' estate gifts are eligible for matching funds from the state of Florida major gifts trust fund, which would raise the total to \$12 million.

The gifts will be used to create an endowed chair in veterinary medicine and an endowed professorship in bovine medicine, as well as an endowed fund to support



The late Robin Weeks is pictured with one of her dogs at her home in DeSoto County.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Mike McNulty

teaching, research and programs at the college. UF veterinary administrators say the gifts will be especially helpful in bolstering the area of bovine health, which is facing critical shortages in veterinary medicine in both the public and private sectors. The bovine professorship may aid in attracting more students to this particular field, as well as enhance disease research in this area, administrators say.

“In this time of decreasing state budgetary support, endowments are critical,” said the college’s dean, Glen Hoffsis, D.V.M. “For our college to receive two endowed positions simultaneously is just extraordinary.”

A previous installment of \$1 million from the Robin Weeks estate enabled the college to meet its \$4 million private funding goal and to obtain \$57 million in state funding for a new small animal hospital.

The most recent gifts consist of \$3.5 million from Robin Weeks’ estate and \$950,000 from the estate of Harriet Weeks, earmarked to the UF veterinary

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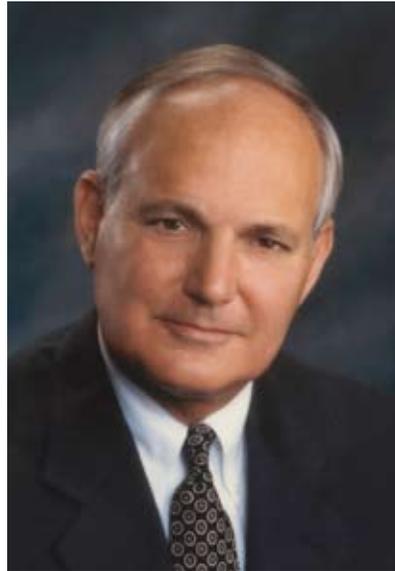


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## Message from the Dean

### Winning the Lottery



Dean Glen Hoffsis

One of the most inspiring stories I have heard in a long time relates to the priceless value of education and how this can affect alumni and the loyalty they feel for their alma mater and also others whose lives they touch.

This story is at the heart of the largest gift the College of Veterinary Medicine has ever received — some \$6 million, which was received by the college just before the end of December 2007. We project that after state matching funds are received, the gift will add \$12 million to the college endowment. Funds will be used to establish two endowed faculty positions, one of which will focus on bovine research; funds for the new small animal hospital; and funds to promote excellence. Endowments such as this are critical in this time of decreasing state budgetary support and will position us to better attract and retain top faculty. It will also help us serve an area of critical need — food supply veterinary medicine.

The gift came from the estate of two hard working cattle ranchers from near Lake Okeechobee. Harriet Weeks and her daughter, Robin, both retired school teachers, struggled their whole lives to make a living on their cattle ranch. They attributed much of their success to their veterinarian, Dr. Mike McNulty, a 1983 graduate of our college. Through the years, Dr. McNulty provided health and production management services to the Weekses and they saw this as vital to sustaining their enterprise.

Some years ago, after a long day of performing veterinary work at the ranch, Dr. McNulty commented to Robin that he was going to purchase a lottery ticket on his way home. She then turned to him and replied, “Dr. McNulty, you have already won the lottery.” When asked to explain, she said that with his veterinary education, which equipped him to provide such valuable services to her and that community, he had something more valuable than winning the lottery.

That comment had a powerful effect on Dr. McNulty and as he reflected on it, he came to more fully appreciate the truth of her statement. Periodic discussions on the statement took place between Dr. McNulty and Robin Weeks over the ensuing years. One day she announced to Dr. McNulty that she wanted to leave her estate to the College of Veterinary Medicine to further the institution that had served him so well. The rest is history.

Dr. McNulty has expressed to me numerous times his pride in the profession and his gratitude in having received a DVM from UF. His professional service was appreciated by the Weekses and in honoring our College with their gift, they have honored their veterinarian and the entire profession as well. The Weekses were well served in the process because they were provided with a way to create their legacy.

It's important to remember the theme behind this story and the resultant gift: Education really is the winning lottery ticket.



Glen Hoffsis  
Dean

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## UF graduate heads for Caribbean to serve as veterinary officer for agricultural group

By Sarah Carey

**W**hen Puerto Rico native Dr. José Urdaz began veterinary school at the University of Florida, his original goal was to work with marine mammals, even working with manatee research in his senior project. That was all fine — until he fell out of love with sea cows and became enamored with cows of the more bucolic kind.

“Actually, I discovered that I loved the FARMS group,” said Urdaz, referring to the acronym used for the UF College of Veterinary Medicine’s food animal reproduction and medicine group.

“I realized that most work I would do with marine mammals would be research-related, and that I probably wouldn’t touch them much. But being with cattle, I was outside, in the sun, plus it was a more relaxing environment. Even though the work was hard, I felt more complete.”

Eight years after graduating from UF’s veterinary college in 1999, Urdaz has taken his interest in cattle and production animal medicine to a new level. This past December, he received his Ph.D. from UF and began his new job — as a veterinary officer for the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, based in San José, Costa Rica.

“I really want to get the science out there and make public policies and regulations that can be applied right away to livestock producers,” Urdaz said. “I want to help create animal health and food safety as a part of my career.”

Initially after graduation, Urdaz planned to return to Puerto Rico to work with dairy cattle. But he found out about an internship in food animal internal medicine, surgery and production at the University of Missouri, and pursued that option. After zeroing in on his interest in dairy production, he accepted a residency at the University of California, Davis, which he completed in 2003, picking up a master’s degree in preventive veterinary medicine along the way.

“Each time I am about to finish a training program, another opportunity arises,” said Urdaz, laughing. “After three years of palpating cows, I wanted to do something different.”

During his Ph.D. program, which was funded in part through a grant from the USDA, Urdaz studied the epidemiology



Dr. Urdaz assists a dairy farmer in completing an 80-question survey. These surveys were conducted one-on-one with each dairy farmer in the region Urdaz was studying.

of bovine anaplasmosis and babesiosis in commercial dairy farms of Puerto Rico.

“One day, Dr. Urdaz came to my office, desperate because he needed a Ph.D. committee chairman as soon as possible,” said Dr. Pedro Melendez, an assistant professor with UF’s FARMS group. “I told him this wasn’t my field, but I agreed to help him and I accepted. After that, he wrote a USDA grant by himself, which was funded for \$99,000 and then for another \$38,000.”

Melendez said he went to Puerto Rico for a few days to help Urdaz get started on his project.

“José is a hard worker and he also is extremely passionate about what he does, which is the reason for his success,” Melendez said.

In his studies, Urdaz dealt with a situation that helped him focus his interests yet again. He wanted to use modern epidemiological tools to understand major infectious disease processes in livestock, so he designed a course-program focusing on geographic information

systems (GIS), ecological modeling and applied veterinary epidemiology.

The program and corresponding courses involved four main academic units at UF: the veterinary college; the department of geography; the department of wildlife ecology and conservation; and the department of statistics.

“I love working with maps,” he said. “During my program, the idea came up about how to integrate GIS (global information systems) with epidemiology. We identified farms on a map and tested whether the diseases on those farms were clustered or not. We figured out what is making the cluster (of disease) and we looked for a river, a road — anything that could tell us something about the disease.”

Through his grant, Urdaz presented his graduate work at several international conferences, including Australia, Italy and France.

“I represented UF all over the place,” he said.

See Urdaz, continued on page 11

# Student creates “aWEARness” to highlight pet overpopulation problem

By Sarah Carey

Got style? University of Florida veterinary senior Allison Montague, also known as “Top Dog” of aWEARness Clothing, not only has it, she can also tell you where to get it and help animals at the same time.

Montague, a former advertising account executive, started the business two years ago. Through her Web site, [www.aWEARness-clothing.com](http://www.aWEARness-clothing.com), she sells T-shirts and other clothing to promote the responsible spaying and neutering of pets. Montague recently decided to donate all profits from her clothing sales to the UF College of Veterinary Medicine’s shelter program. The program, through which veterinary students gain surgical experience by spaying and neutering animals from the Alachua County animal shelter, has been threatened by recent county budget cuts.

“After getting into veterinary school, I learned that a small percentage of pet owners actually spay and neuter their pets,” Montague said. “In school, we learn the benefits of these types of programs.”

Three million to 4 million dogs and cats enter animal shelters each year in the United States, and roughly half of those animals are euthanized, according to the Humane Society of the United States.

As school unfolded, Montague discovered the shelter medicine program didn’t just help animals — it also enabled her to hone surgical skills and better prepare for private practice.

“I’ve done a few externships, where the doctors were impressed with the surgical skills I know I would not have had were it not for the shelter program,” Montague said. “My first day in the shelter medicine rotation, it took me an hour and a half to do a spay, but on my last it took me 20 minutes. Everything improved tremendously, and my confidence did, too. Everyone’s nervous the first time they perform surgery.”

Montague developed her Web site, [aWEARness-clothing.com](http://www.aWEARness-clothing.com), with help from her brother, Matt Montague, and classmate Crystal Hmielewski.

She came up with catchy slogans such as “Neutering makes dogs less nuts” and “Cats can’t add, but they’re great at multiplying” to include on her shirts. Meanwhile, Hmielewski established the Web site, capturing visuals that include photos of some of Montague’s classmates modeling various items. Then she went to Premier Productions in Gainesville, a custom design and printing company.

“We worked together on some of my ideas and came up with some layouts,” Montague said. “We ended up with between 600 and 700 items in multiple designs, sizes and colors.”



Behind Allison Montague are, left to right, Tiffany Holcomb, Katie Horne and Heather Baginski. All are members of the class of '08.

Photo by Sarah Carey

Shirts start at \$15 a piece, and are available on her Web site, [www.aWEARness-clothing.com](http://www.aWEARness-clothing.com).

Just a week after Montague sent a collegewide e-mail about her plan to donate proceeds from sales to the shelter program, she already had raised \$100.

“What Allison did by donating all the profits from the sale of her spay/neuter aWEARness T-shirts is phenomenal,” said Dr. Natalie Isaza, the shelter program coordinator. “The program received so much support from our students, both current and former, when they learned the program might lose funding, and Allison’s generosity illustrates how much the students appreciate this clinical elective.”

## Veterinary researchers probe link between nicotine and breathing awareness

By Sarah Carey

If that smoker next to you seems more relaxed than you, you might be right. UF veterinary researchers say smokers do experience less stress than non-smokers because nicotine appears to mask the brain's awareness of outside stimuli, thereby reducing anxiety.

"Smoking may kill, but the stress-reducing effects of nicotine on the brain are probably one reason why the habit is so prominent among college students," said Paul Davenport, Ph.D., a professor in the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine's department of physiological sciences. "As many as 15 to 20 percent of college students are smokers, perhaps best exemplified by the phenomenon of social smoking. These students often ignore the deadly side effects in exchange for the trade-off of reduced anxiety."

Davenport is studying the effect of nicotine withdrawal on brain activity and cough in one of four projects UF veterinary researchers have been working on as part of a \$1 million grant from the Florida Department of Health's James and Esther King Biomedical Research Program. Data from his study assessing how nicotine affects smokers' ability to sense their breathing will be presented in May at the American Thoracic Society meeting. For that project, Davenport measured how respiratory stimuli are controlled by higher brain centers responsible for thinking, reasoning and problem-solving and found that individuals who are withdrawing from smoking become more aware of their breathing and may even become fearful, especially if their airway becomes obstructed.

"When you have individuals that abstain from smoking for a 12-hour period, they get very agitated," Davenport said. "This is because while they are smoking, smokers' brain activity is 'gated,' or controlled. Nicotine is useful because it reduces anxiety, but it also helps mask certain brain activity, so that if you withdraw from nicotine you are much more sensitive to stimuli coming in."



Photo by Ray Carson

Dr. Paul Davenport and his graduate student, Sarah Pei-Ying Chan apply a respiratory load to a subject. The subject is not seen because they are in an adjacent room. Davenport's recent nicotine studies also examine the relationship between brain activity and respiration.

Other research efforts, spearheaded by Donald Bolser, Ph.D., and Linda Hayward, Ph.D., from the veterinary college and David Fuller, Ph.D., from UF's College of Public Health and Health Professions, are examining the effects of nicotine on everything from sleep patterns to newborns exposed in the womb. In future studies, Davenport plans to examine how nicotine affects the brain pathways that lead to consciousness.

"You don't constantly think about breathing, but when something changes, you become aware of it," Davenport said. "With smoking, your lungs change, but you're not aware of it. It's awareness of one's internal

environment that we are most interested in."

In a related study with Bolser, whose expertise is in the cough reflex, Davenport has used capsaicin — the hot ingredient in hot peppers — to induce the urge to cough. He and Bolser are interested in why smokers don't cough in response to inhaling cigarette smoke, but non-smokers do.

"This sensation of the need to cough comes before you actually cough, which allows our consciousness to interact with the cough reflex," Davenport said. "If you're in a concert and you feel the need to cough, you have the ability to suppress that cough by conscious mechanisms.

See Davenport, page 7

# Tennessean owes Florida veterinarians — for one more Christmas with dog

By Sarah Carey

**T**hanks to University of Florida veterinarians, Tennessean Marc Mandeville once more celebrated Christmas with his beloved boxer, Sirius, who is recuperating at home in Knoxville after successful treatment this fall for a brain tumor.

“Sirius loves Christmas,” said Mandeville, who gave his 6-year-old boxer plenty of Frisbees and other favorite toys and treats this year. “The night before, he is always restless because he knows there will be presents under the tree for him.”

So far Sirius is doing well and is seizure-free, Mandeville said.

“His medication has him hungry and thirsty, but beyond that, there are no recurring issues,” Mandeville said.

The procedure Sirius received in Gainesville at UF’s Veterinary Medical Center — known as stereotactic radiosurgery, or SRS — is not available anywhere else in the Southeast.

Sirius’ problems first became apparent when Mandeville, a district sales representative for Socket Mobile, returned home with him after their morning walk. Sirius typically would lie down on the tile kitchen floor while Mandeville began working from his home office. But that day, he came over and leaned against Mandeville, giving him a strange look. Almost immediately, the dog collapsed on his side and went into a seizure.

When the seizures continued, Mandeville took Sirius to the University of Tennessee’s College of Veterinary Medicine. A CT scan of Sirius’ brain revealed a mass, which a biopsy and an ultrasound identified as an oligodendrocytoma of the left forebrain, an aggressive tumor common in boxers.

Mandeville searched the Internet to learn more about treatment options and discovered an article about an advanced method of obliterating tumors and lesions with a single session of potent and precisely pinpointed radiation that UF veterinarians are using to help animals through a unique relationship the veterinary school has with UF’s McKnight Brain Institute.

He asked Dr. Sarita Miles, an intern at UT and a 2007 UF veterinary graduate who helped treat Sirius, about the procedure. Miles



The team arrived at the McKnight Brain Institute on the morning of Oct. 26 for Sirius’s procedure. Pictured left to right with Sirius are neurology resident Dr. Rossi House; anesthesia technician Maria Ransone, small animal medicine/surgery intern Dr. Katie Belz, offshore veterinary student Phil Shaw, junior veterinary student Steve Tutela and offshore veterinary student Zach Snable.

Photo by Sarah Carey

put Mandeville in touch with UF neurology resident Dr. Rossi House to determine whether Sirius was a candidate.

“I told him this was probably Sirius’ best chance for long-term survival,” House said.

The side effects associated with SRS are almost nonexistent, particularly when compared with conventional treatment, UF veterinarians say.

In the past seven years, UF veterinarians, working in close collaboration with faculty and staff at the McKnight Brain Institute, have treated nearly 100 cases, including animals with tumors located not only within the brain but also within the nose and mouth, and even osteosarcomas of the limbs.

“We will irradiate any tumor within the cranial vault regardless of what type we think

it is,” said Dr. Tom Schubert, chief of the UF veterinary college’s neurology service.

Neurology cases receiving SRS have CT and MRI images taken. Those images then are merged and analyzed with special software, so veterinarians can precisely pinpoint the tumor and determine the proper dose of radiation to be administered.

Mandeville and his wife, who do not have children, said they view Sirius as a family member.

“In our minds, the cost was a small price to pay for a member of our family,” he said. “What we know is that we did everything that we could have possibly done to help him, and that we feel good about. When it comes right down to it, we weren’t ready to give up.”



Photo courtesy of Bob Richardson

Harriet and Robin Weeks both had worked as school teachers before taking over operation of the family ranch and 300-head of cattle.

college. An additional gift of approximately \$500,000 is expected when the estates are totally settled.

“Harriet and Robin were both school teachers and part-time ranchers until Robin’s father and brother passed away,” said accountant Robert Richardson, a trustee for the Weekses’ estate. “Not wealthy people, the Weekses sacrificed heavily to retain their land and to run a 300-head cattle ranch.

“Their family was not a typical one to make such a large bequest,” Richardson

added. “Harriet and Robin made their decision because of their commitment to Florida agriculture and love of small animals, as well as their desire to help veterinary students through education and research.”

Dr. Mike McNulty, a mixed-animal practitioner and a member of the college’s class of ’83, was Robin Weeks’ veterinarian and friend for many years. McNulty worked with Weeks’ four herds of Brangus cattle, advising her on health and production management.

“I’ll never forget, a few years before she died, I was leaving her ranch late on a Saturday afternoon and I told her, ‘I’m going to stop and get a lottery ticket.’ She immediately replied, ‘you’ve already won the lottery.’”

McNulty added, “I looked at her quizzically and she explained, ‘with your education, you’ve already won the lottery.’ She knew

education was a sure ticket, if not to wealth and riches, at least to a better life. I’ve never forgotten that afternoon and appreciate it greatly every time I think about it.”

Some time later, he shared with Weeks his intent to include the UF veterinary college in his own estate plans.

“I think that registered in her mind,” he said, adding that a short time after Weeks became ill, she asked to meet with him at her home.



Photo by Sarah Carey

Dr. Mike McNulty visited the UF veterinary college in 2006 and is pictured here with Dr. Jim Himes, associate dean emeritus of students and instruction.

“She said she wanted me to give her some information about how to make a gift to the veterinary college,” McNulty said. “I then put her in touch with the college’s development office and her plans unfolded from that point.”

Harriet Weeks died in February 2005 and Robin

Weeks died shortly thereafter. The majority of their estate assets consisted of agricultural real estate in Glades County.

“I’m pleased that Dr. McNulty has remained so loyal to the college, and that he felt he received such a great veterinary education here,” Hoffsis said. “He was able to use his education for his clients’ benefit, and in doing so, helped the Weekses create their legacy through these substantial gifts.”

“That’s why it’s important that your brain knows your need to cough before you actually cough,” he added. “Nicotine is changing the way the brain functions.”

Bolser said studies of the relationship between the urge-to-cough sensation and the behavior associated with it are new and a “big deal” in the field of respiratory disease research.

“The people in our field really didn’t think about the sensations associated with the behavior and how the behavior is produced,” Bolser said. “The urge to cough is a sensation we now know exists and now we are thinking about the relevance of the urge to how the nervous system generates behavior and how this might be a factor in how cough suppressants work.”

Davenport said it’s clear that if breathing is obstructed in either animals or humans, tremendous fear and anxiety occur, and in many cases, humans experience a full-blown panic attack.

“What is it about disordered breathing that makes us so fearful, and what can we do to help patients and animals that have these tremendous fear responses to disordered breathing?” Davenport asks.

“Clinically, we need to treat the lung disease, but what we seldom treat is the anxiety the patient has.”

Anyone with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease understands the feeling of breathlessness even upon such activity as walking through a mall, or mild exercise. Because of this, many people with COPD become less and less active, Davenport said.

“When we fear we won’t be able to breathe, we won’t exercise,” he said. “So if we can figure out how to lessen the anxiety of those who suffer from COPD, we can improve their rehabilitation from lung disease.”

And as for those college students who smoke — don’t look for their habits to change anytime soon.

“The use of nicotine to self-medicate for stress has serious side effects, produces deadly disease and is extremely addictive,” Davenport said. “When I talk to young people, I tell them, ‘You will get lung and heart disease; smoking will kill you.’ But we have to recognize that even with that knowledge, kids still smoke because they feel the benefits exceed the risks.”

## Veterinary administrator receives lifetime achievement award

John Harvey, D.V.M., Ph.D., a professor and chairman of the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine's department of physiological sciences, has received the American Society for Veterinary Clinical Pathology's lifetime achievement award.



Dr. John Harvey

The award was presented during the group's annual meeting, held Nov. 10 in Savannah, in honor of Harvey's numerous contributions and outstanding service within the field of veterinary clinical pathology.

The ASVCP is a professional organization dedicated to education, scientific research and standards in veterinary laboratory medicine and diagnostics.

A Kansas native, Harvey earned both his bachelor's and D.V.M. degrees from Kansas State and his Ph.D. from the University of California, Davis. He is board-certified in clinical pathology by the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.

Harvey's research interests are comparative hematology and erythrocyte enzyme deficiencies. He discovered and named the Ehrlichia platys organism that infects platelets in dogs and, along with co-workers, first recognized and reported four inherited erythrocyte enzyme deficiencies.

Among the honors Harvey has received at UF are the Daniels Pharmaceutical Senior Clinical Investigator Award and the Norden Distinguished Teacher Award. He was given an Alumni Recognition Award from the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2002.

A former president of the American Society for Veterinary Clinical Pathology, Harvey also served as president of the International Society for Animal Clinical Pathology. He has published more than 140 journal articles and book chapters concerning comparative hematology and has presented more than 210 scientific and continuing education talks and seminars.

Harvey has been a member of UF's veterinary faculty since 1974.

## Scientist to head up manatee rehabilitation partnership

Iske Larkin, Ph.D., an assistant scientist with the University of Florida's Aquatic Animal Health program, will chair the Manatee Rehabilitation Partnership.

The partnership consists of a consortium of scientists, educators, government agencies, wildlife organizations, zoos and aquariums, all of which are involved in rehabilitating and monitoring released Florida manatees. The group's goal is to monitor released manatees to ensure their survival in the wild, provide new data to improve rehabilitated manatee survivorship and to continue to learn about manatee natural history.

Larkin's research interests include Florida manatee reproductive endocrinology, reproductive behavior, embryology and development. She arranges several courses relating to aquatic animal health for the UF College of Veterinary Medicine and has for several years coordinated a lecture series that brings experts in various aspects of aquatic animal health to Gainesville to speak with college faculty, staff and students as well as the public.

For more information about the partnership, go to [www.wildtracks.org](http://www.wildtracks.org)



Dr. Iske Larkin

## Emeritus professor honored by equine group

Alfred Merritt, D.V.M., the former Appleton Professor of Equine Studies and retired director of the Island Whirl Equine Colic Research Laboratory at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, has received the Florida Association of Equine Practitioners' lifetime achievement award.

FAEP members honored Merritt, a



Dr. Alfred Merritt

UF faculty member from 1978 until his retirement in 2003, in September during the group's annual meeting in the Bahamas.

Award presenter Carol Clark, D.V.M., completed her residency in large animal medicine at UF.

"There is probably not a person at this meeting whose life has not been touched by Dr. Merritt," she said.

Merritt's primary research interests were the function and malfunction of the equine gastrointestinal system. The Island Whirl laboratory is a resource for faculty, staff and student research in the area of equine colic.

Merritt served as editor or co-editor of four books and has written 20 book chapters. Two of his books, "Equine Medicine and Surgery" and "Veterinary Gastroenterology" are widely used in veterinary courses throughout the world.

While at UF, Merritt was recognized with several teaching awards, including the Norden Distinguished Teacher Award, which is bestowed by college faculty. Veterinary students chose Merritt three times as Large Animal Clinician of the Year.

## Veterinary ophthalmologist presents Smith Lecture to British equine group

University of Florida veterinary ophthalmologist Dennis Brooks, D.V.M., Ph.D., presented the prestigious Sir Frederick Smith Memorial Lecture in Warwickshire, England kicking off the annual meeting of the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA).

The lecture is named in honor of the late Sir Frederick Smith, a veterinarian that started the British Army Veterinary Corp for cavalry horses in the late 1800s. He served in the British Army in India and in South Africa. Smith was knighted and also became a Major General, and performed research into equine laminitis, and general horse health.

"He even did some ophthalmology of the horse," Brooks said.

A professor in small and large animal clinical sciences at UF's College of Veterinary



Dr. Dennis Brooks

Medicine, Brooks spoke to the British Equine Veterinary Association about the changing medical standards of care in horses with ophthalmic problems, and the use of antiproteases in treating infectious corneal ulcers in horses. He was seated next to Britain's Princess Anne during the BEVA's awards presentation, and received a medal for his selection as the Smith Memorial Lecturer.

## Surgery resident honored for presentation

Alastair Coomer, B.V.Sc., a second-year resident in small animal surgery at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, won first prize in the research category of the Resident's Forum at the annual American College of Veterinary Surgeons meeting, held Oct. 17-21 in Chicago.



Dr. Alastair Coomer

Coomer, who also is pursuing a master's degree at the college, was honored for a presentation focusing on his graduate studies and titled "Intramuscular Murine Model for Radiation Therapy of Canine Osteosarcoma."

ACVS established the Outstanding Surgical Resident Awards competition to encourage the development of clinically important research and the dissemination of the results of these investigations, particularly those conducted by surgical residents.



Dr. Doug Corey, right, outgoing president of the AAEP, places the "President's Pin" on Dr. Eleanor Green Dec. 4 at the group's annual meeting.

## College administrator heads equine group

Eleanor Myers Green, D.V.M., chairwoman of the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine's department of large animal clinical sciences, is the new president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners. She will serve through 2008.

Green, who also serves as chief of staff of UF's Large Animal Veterinary Medical Center, was inducted into office during the AAEP's annual convention, held Dec. 1-5 in Orlando. She is the first female practitioner to serve as the AAEP's president.

Board-certified by both the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine and the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Green is a past president of the ABVP and also of the American Association of Veterinary Clinicians.

She has been an active member of AAEP since joining the organization in 1973, the year she graduated from veterinary school at Auburn. Green most recently served as AAEP's president-elect and also has served as a district director and as chair of the internship and student relations committee and the AAEP foundation's student scholarship task force, and has participated on several other committees.

The AAEP, headquartered in Lexington, Ky., was founded in 1954 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the health and welfare of the horse. The group has 8,500 members worldwide and is actively involved in ethics issues, practice management, research and continuing education in the equine veterinary profession and horse industry.

## Veterinary anesthesia technician joins elite ranks with national certification

A University of Florida veterinary anesthesia technician has become the first UF veterinary technician, and only the second in the state, to receive certification in this specialty by the Academy of Veterinary Technician Anesthetists.

Terry Torres, an employee of UF's Veterinary Medical Center, learned in December that she had passed her certification examination. For her, the process was a way to validate 20 years of experience as an animal anesthetist.

"Specialty certification should allow technicians to advance up the career ladder," Torres said. "It definitely has promoted interest from the rest of the staff, and we have another technician applying to take the 2009 examination."

Applicants must have at least 6,000 hours of experience as a certified veterinary technician, with 75 percent of that time spent providing anesthesia. To be considered for the certification process, applicants must also have amassed at least 40 hours of continuing education relating to anesthesia over a five-year span, and must submit a case log of 50 or more anesthesia cases as well as four detailed case reports.



Veterinary technician Terry Torres in the clinic, working with Joshua, a Chihuahua.

Photo by Dr. Sheilah Robertson

## Former CVM faculty member, esteemed veterinary radiologist dies

By Sarah Carey

**N**orman Ackerman, D.V.M., a board-certified veterinary radiologist and former faculty member at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, has died.

Known by his peers and friends as a quiet and humble man as well as a great teacher, Ackerman, 65, was a member of UF's veterinary faculty from 1979 to 1994.

"Dr. Ackerman was one of our earliest faculty members and a stalwart leader of our radiology service," said Colin Burrows, B.Vet.Med., Ph.D. Burrows helped recruit Ackerman back to UF two years ago to serve as a locum in the veterinary college's radiology service.

"A new generation of students and clinicians were able to appreciate his skills," Burrows said. "He was a universally revered radiologist and the profession is poorer for his passing."

A 1966 graduate of Auburn University's School of Veterinary Medicine, Ackerman served for three years as base veterinarian for the United States Air Force in Japan and in Thailand. He completed his residency in radiology at the University of Missouri and later served as an assistant professor of radiology on the veterinary school faculties at the University of Missouri and the University of California, Davis prior to coming to UF.

He was a professor of veterinary radiology and had served as chief of the college's radiology service when he left UF in 1994. He subsequently practiced in Louisville, Ky., and in Huntsville, Ala.

"Dr. Ackerman was one of the reasons I went into veterinary radiology," said Clifford "Kip" Berry, D.V.M., a 1984 graduate of the UF veterinary college. "Just after my residency when I came back and taught at UF for a year, he prepared me for the oral board examination, which I passed, and protected me so that I could do the appropriate research for a tenure track position."

"He was great pillar in my life and was a fatherly figure to me," Berry added. "There is nothing that I can say that would ever truly express my appreciation for his help and what he did for me, or my admiration for him."

Ackerman became board certified as a Diplomate in the American College of Veterinary Radiology in 1974 and also was a member of the Radiological Society of North America, the American Veterinary Medical Association, Phi Zeta and the Association of Military Surgeons.

"Dr. Ackerman was a highly respected member of the ACVR," said Tod Drost, D.V.M., the group's current president and an associate professor at The Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Drost is a 1991 graduate of the UF veterinary college.



Dr. Norm Ackerman with an anesthetized bear.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Michael Schaefer

"He was one of the pillars of ACVR and respected as a great diagnostic radiologist. Even after he left UF, he continued to work in the clinic there and elsewhere when needed, and anytime the clinic was short of people, he helped."

Drost said Ackerman had coauthored two editions of a textbook, "Small Animal Radiology and Ultrasonography," with Ron Burk.

"My colleagues and I never refer to the title of the book, we just always call it 'Burk and Ackerman,'" Drost said.

"People do say that, or they call it Ackerman and Burk, because 'A' is before 'B,'" said Crispin Spencer, D.V.M., a former UF veterinary college faculty member and board-certified veterinary radiologist who worked closely with Ackerman for many years while at UF.

Spencer said Ackerman's name "nearly always ended up first" on almost every list of any committee or group he ever belonged to, because of its spelling.

"There were not very many veterinary radiologists at all when Norm first became board certified in 1974," Spencer said. "At that time, he was one of the most revered radiologists in the country. Everybody knew of his skill and dedication to the profession. It was quite a feat to have him end up at Florida."

In 15 years they worked together at UF, Crispin said he and Ackerman grew together as clinicians, seeing many of the same cases.

"You work with someone every day, day in and day out, and go to professional meetings together, you almost start to think alike," Spencer said. "In some ways, it's like being married."

But he added, "In all the time we knew each other, we never had a cross word."

Spencer said Ackerman was a kind and concerned teacher dedicated to writing and publishing clinically pertinent material for the student, the practitioner and his radiological colleagues.

"He was 100 percent behind the students and their getting an excellent education," Spencer said. "He might have come across sometimes as being a little tough on them, but the truth was, he just really wanted the students to develop excellence."

Behind the scenes, the private and reserved Ackerman, who was also an accomplished photographer, and an avid reader and was known to have a quick and dry wit. He could be unusually kind and unexpectedly generous in his dealings with friends and colleagues.

Ackerman had extensive experience in MRI and CT scanning, and in addition to his textbook, authored or coauthored numerous scientific articles in the field of veterinary radiology.

He is survived by his wife, Lourdes Corman, M.D., of Huntsville and two children. 🐾

As Urdaz approached the end of his program, like most new graduates, he began looking for a job. He approached Dr. Charlie Courtney, the UF CVM's associate dean for research and graduate studies, for guidance.

"I said, 'these are my goals. I want to work with epidemiology, with GIS, and I want to work in the Caribbean,'" Urdaz said.

Courtney directed Urdaz to Dr. Paul Gibbs, professor of infectious diseases at UF and an expert in virology, who then put Urdaz in touch with one of the world's most renowned epidemiologists, Dr. Moe Salman from Colorado State University. The two corresponded and a few months later, Salman urged Urdaz to send his resumé to the USDA, as the department was seeking a veterinarian job candidate for IICA.

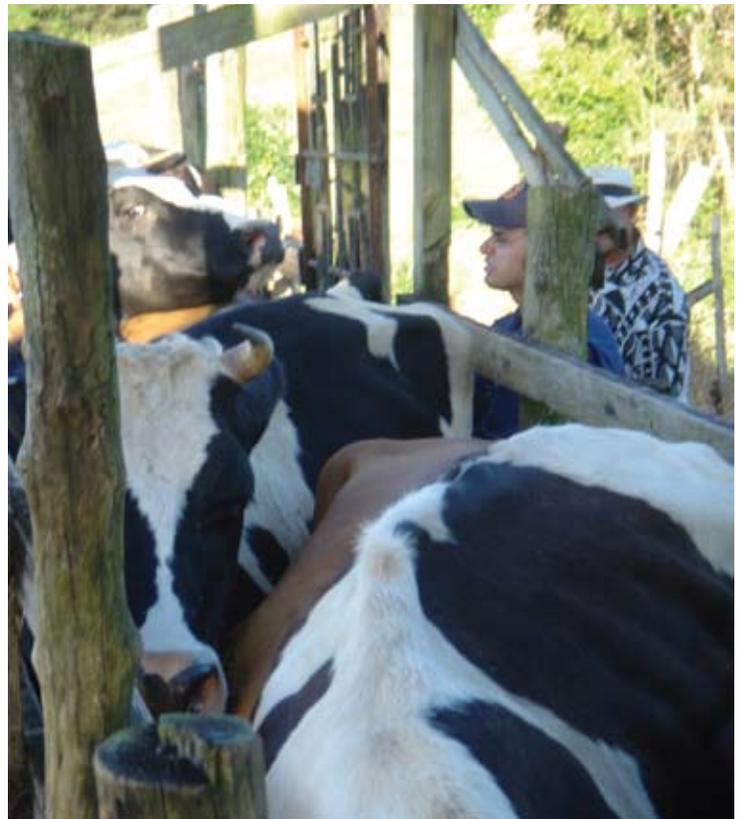
After an initial interview with the USDA and a subsequent presentation to IICA in Costa Rica, Urdaz got the job.

"My group will consist of six people, with 33 countries in five regions reporting to us," Urdaz said. "This is a great opportunity for me. My main goal besides epidemiological research is to help develop public health policies and regulations within major livestock industries and among livestock producers to solve national and regional animal disease-related problems."

One of Urdaz's mentors from UF's FARMS group, Dr. Carlos Risco, is very proud of his former student and truly believes Urdaz will be successful in meeting his goals.

"José's creativity in designing an applied epidemiological model to understand an infectious disease process for his Ph.D. work is remarkable," Risco said. "He will become a tremendous asset to the Inter-American Institute because of his strong background in dairy production medicine and training in epidemiology."

IICA's Web site identifies the group as a specialized agency of the Inter-American System, and claims its purposes are to encourage and support the efforts of its member states to achieve agricultural development and well-being for rural populations.



Blood samples were obtained from each animal to test for antibodies against *Anaplasma marginale* and *Babesia bovis*.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Jose Urdaz

Urdaz said he has always felt driven to help people working within the field of agriculture.

"My classmates used to make fun of me because I wanted to save the world and make milk to feed everyone, to help people. They'd tell me I was a dreamer, but you know what? Being a dreamer has taken me a long way." 🐄

## James A. Himes Scholarship reaches threshold for state match

Thanks to several last-minute gifts from UF College of Veterinary Medicine alumni, the James A. Himes Alumni Scholarship fund has surpassed the \$100,000 threshold amount needed to become eligible for state matching funds.

Dean Glen Hoffsis made the announcement Jan. 20 at the North American Veterinary Conference during the CVM alumni reception, drawing huge applause from the packed crowd. The college will now request \$50,000 in matching funds, which, if obtained, would allow the scholarship to provide approximately \$6,000 per year — \$1,000 each — indefinitely to six senior veterinary students in need of financial aid.



Dean Glen Hoffsis, Dr. Jim Himes and Dr. Link Welborn, '82, are pictured at the North American Veterinary Conference Jan. 20 in Orlando.

Photo by Sarah Carey

A total of \$108,625 was raised for the fund. Created in 1998, the Himes Scholarship was named in honor of the college's associate dean emeritus for students and instruction. Himes' service to UF began more than 40 years ago and continues today.

"For 15 of those years, Dr. Himes served as associate dean for students and instruction," said Link Welborn, D.V.M., '82, who helped conceive of and develop the scholarship when it was first formed and who has been instrumental in keeping alumni involved in the fundraising effort.

"His unselfish and caring nature has touched the lives of thousands of students, families and colleagues. This \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to a veterinary student with financial need and who has demonstrated what we call 'the Himes attitude,'" Welborn said.

As professor and associate dean emeritus, Himes continues to go to his office at the college almost every weekday.

"He remains dedicated to helping veterinary and pre-veterinary students in every way that he can," Welborn said. 🐄

**March 30** The first annual Holistic and Integrative Veterinary Medicine Symposium, presented by the Holistic and Integrative Veterinary Medical Club and sponsored by Betsy Coville, D.V.M., and Natura Pet Products, will be held. Continuing education credits will be offered. For more information about speakers and registration, e-mail [conferences@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:conferences@dce.ufl.edu) or call (352) 392-1701 or go to [www.conferences.dce.ufl.edu/holistic](http://www.conferences.dce.ufl.edu/holistic).

**April 12** The annual Open House, sponsored by the UF College of Veterinary Medicine and the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association, will take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the main college complex in Gainesville. For more information, go to: [www.vetmed.ufl.edu/openhouse](http://www.vetmed.ufl.edu/openhouse).

**April 12** The Class of 1983 will have its 25th anniversary celebration as a part of Spring Weekend at the University of Florida. Contact Jo Ann Winn at (352) 392-2213, ext. 5013 or e-mail [winnj@vetmed.ufl.edu](mailto:winnj@vetmed.ufl.edu) for more information.

**May 24** Commencement exercises for the Class of 2008 will be held at the UF Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Contact the Office for Students and Instruction at (352) 392-2213, ext. 5300 for more information.

**June 28** Referring Veterinarian Appreciation Day will be held at the UF Hilton. Contact Cathy Gentilman by e-mail at [cgentil@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:cgentil@dce.ufl.edu) for more information.



Dr. Gabriela Bamert-Boyert, class of 2000, and her husband, Brad Boyert, were among the guests at the CVM homecoming barbecue on Nov. 3.

Photo by Sarah Carey



Genevieve Perez with Dr. Julio Ibanez, class of 1981, and veterinary student ambassador Jennifer Weaver, class of 2008. The three are pictured with a poster showing the location of CVM alumni – members of the Gator Nation practicing veterinary medicine all across the U.S.

Photo by Sarah Carey

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