



# SVME Newsletter

Newsletter of the Society for  
Veterinary Medical Ethics

Summer 2011

## President's Message Summer 2011



**Alice Villalobos, DVM, DPNAP**  
with Neo, her Olde English Bulldog

Dear SVME,

Come to the SVME Plenary Sessions on Monday July 18th at AVMA in St. Louis! There will be a short Business Meeting starting promptly at 5:45 to vote on three items:

- a) That the SVME return to the List Serve for further communications.
- b) Elect new candidates to the SVME BOD.
- c) Move for a two year presidency in keeping with other organizations.

The BOD will hold its annual meeting over dinner right after the short business meeting.

The SVME revitalization plan is moving forward. The SVME must move forward because the field of bioethics in veterinary medicine needs the SVME. With its mission statement and its goals, the SVME must remain and serve the profession as its main bioethical forum and spark plug for insightful discussions and papers dealing with difficult and emerging bioethical dilemmas. The SVME will form closer ties with the AVMA Legal Association represented by Dr. James Wilson, JD and the energy of the newly organized HSVMA represented by Drs. Gary Block and Patricia Olson.

Here is more good SVME news to share with you!

- 1) The SVME has doubled its membership. It now has 231 active members many of whom will become excellent future leaders of the SVME.

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- 2) We also have a revitalized BOD with the email election of Drs. Jose Peralta, Lide Doffermyre and Lee Shapiro.
- 3) We have new candidates for the BOD who will be inducted this year.
- 4) Ethics Instructors from the Americas, Europe and Australia have contacted me regarding the SVME revitalization plan to serve as the home base for bioethics instruction.
- 5) Our List of Ethics Instructors has grown extensively thanks to the Herculean efforts of one of our new SVME member, Dr. Dennis Lawler.
- 6) The on-line student bioethics CE course is rolling along and may be completed by the July SVME BOD Meeting at AVMA in St. Louis. We have Dr. John McCarthy, Dr. Jose Peralta, Ph.D, Dr. Diane Levitan, ACVIM, and yours truly to thank for the basic courses. And we thank Jerry Tannenbaum, JD, and Bernie Rollin, Ph.D. for their interest, encouragement, edits and feedback.
- 7) We have the good fortune of reestablishing communication with veterinary medicine bioethics and legal ethics icons and future leaders in the veterinary ethics community.
- 8) The Student Essay Contest participation multiplied by 12 times this year! Students submitted excellent essays. The 2011 Winner is Ms. Kristen Willer of Iowa State.
- 9) The SVME has 2 nominations for the Shomer Award this year. The late Dr. Franklin Lowe who served as Dean of Tufts was nominated by Jerry Tannenbaum and Dr. Frank McMillan of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary was nominated by yours truly . There was no Award given in 2010. The 2009 SVME Shomer Award winner was Jerry Tannenbaum JD who was not present in 2009 to receive his award. He received a beautiful sculptured glass plaque to commemorate the honor of receiving the SVME's most distinguished award. The late Dr. Franklin Lowe was selected as the recipient of the SVME 2011 Shomer Award for his leadership with the formative days of the SVME and his unwavering support of veterinary medical ethics as a vital part of the veterinary medical school curriculum.

Luv-in-pets,

**Alice**

### 2011 is World Veterinary Year [www.vet2011.org](http://www.vet2011.org)



King Louis

The horse was central to all activities, in the late eighteenth century, for agriculture, transportation and war. Claude Bourgelat, a veterinarian, authored *Éléments d'hippiatrique* (1750–1753) a 3 part text. He was a member of the [French Academy of Sciences](http://www.frenchacademyofsciences.org/) (1752) and was held in high esteem by influential military leaders and officers whom he had trained in horsemanship. Bourgelat gained the support of Henri Bertin, a close friend from his home town to open École vétérinaire de Lyon. Bertin was Louis XV's Controller-General of Finances and Minister for Agriculture and a former Steward for the Generality of Lyon. Bertin felt that the royal court's 5,000 horses would benefit from the new school that might advance equine performance, survival and care. Bertin helped Bourgelat gain financing from King Louis XV to open the school in Lyon in 1762. A second school was built in Alfort which remains active.



Henri-Léonard Bertin



## AVMA Ethics Plenary Sessions

### St. Louis, July 16-19, 2011

From Controversy to Consensus: Impact of Public Opinion/Social Ethics on VM

***Program Chair: Alice Villalobos, DVM, DPNAP***

The role of the ethicist is to analyze and interpret problems from various perspectives (especially the opponent's) and to ask the difficult questions that will promote discussions and enlightenment. The ethicist is steadfastly determined to remind colleagues, stakeholders and society to develop an open mind regarding differences. The ethicist will request individuals to think clearly and do the right thing, despite the actions and belief of others who might not be fully informed or possess the ability to remain unprejudiced and unbiased.

The 2011 Ethics Plenary Sessions will discuss ethical concerns such as: Equine ethics; ethics for private pets in clinical trials; if veterinarians are obliged to give palliative care; using pets in clinical trials; whether VIN can stay objective and free of sponsorship bias; student dilemmas with animal welfare, whether the "pay or kill" (either or) model of practice is ethical or fair in a recession economy. Veterinarians juggle moral and ethical issues on a daily basis. The Ethics Plenary Sessions will provide a forum for v-team caregivers to discuss their doubts and concerns about ethical dilemmas. Attendees will gain unique perspectives from experts during the sessions and the Panel Discussion and will walk away with valuable insights into some very difficult issues and distressful situations.

### AVMA Ethics Plenary Sessions Schedule

<b>8:00AM-10:00AM</b>	<b>Equine Ethics</b>
<b>10:00AM-11:00AM</b>	<b>Are Veterinarians Obligated to Provide Palliative Care?</b>
<b>11:00AM-12:00PM</b>	<b>Companion Animals in Clinical Trials and Research</b>
<b>12:00PM-2:00PM</b>	<b>ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION: PALLIATIVE AND HOPSICE CARE</b>
<b>PANEL:</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <i>Dr. Tina Ellenbogen</i>  <i>Val Haijek RVT</i> </div> <div> <i>Dr. Robin Downing</i>  <i>Anne McClannahan RVT</i> </div> <div> <i>Dr. Amir Shannon</i>  <i>Mr. Steve Dale</i> </div> </div>
<b>2:00PM-3:00PM</b>	<b>Ethics, Politics, Honesty, Economics, Openness, Collegiality, Responsibility and Leadership in the VIN Community</b>
<b>3:00PM-4:00PM</b>	<b>Declaw, Devoicing, Desexing &amp; Student Issues</b>
<b>4:00PM-5:00PM</b>	<b>Does the Pay or Kill Policy Drive Over Charging &amp; Over Treatment?</b>

~ See abstracts and speakers' bios on following pages ~

**8:00AM -10:00AM****Equine Ethics**

The abuse of horses in racing is widely recognized. Immature horses in training widely suffer breakdowns prematurely ending their athletic career. How many race horses in the past were fired without benefit of anesthesia? The enforced rest while they healed often did allow healing, but think of the pain these sensitive and highly reactive prey animals had to suffer. Horses feel a fly bite! The competitive showing of domestic livestock species had, originally, as its purpose, the improvement of breeds. But, unfortunately, conflict of interest, human greed and ego have led to abusive practices in the breeding, training, and showing of show horses which are very widespread.

The most well known of these practices is the “soreing” of the Tennessee Walking Horse. Despite federal legislation against it, it still exists; Human greed and ego perpetuating the infliction of continuous pain upon a truly noble breed of horse. The abnormally lowered head position in certain Western classes such as Western Pleasure, and, increasingly seen in reining horses is, in my experience, a major contribution to forelimb lameness and is, in addition, a violation of the best concepts of horsemanship. Excessive painful mouth contact and whipping and spurring is constantly seen in dressage events and is not necessary as proven by certain exceptional trainers.

50 years ago, the only futurities were in horse racing. Today we have cutting futurities, reining futurities, barrel racing futurities, and so on. If the futurities were moved up a year or two it would prevent a lot of suffering in these young horses. The extreme action and the rigorous training imposed upon these immature horses does great musculoskeletal damage. This turns out to be financially profitable for the pharmaceutical industry and the veterinary profession. But is it ethical? It is incumbent upon us, as doctors of veterinary medicine trained and sworn to improve the quality of life for animals to do all we can to eradicate cruel and abusive practices.

**By Dr. Robert M. Miller AKA, “RMM” the cartoonist**

A 1950 graduate of Colorado State University, Dr. Miller founded Conejo Valley Veterinary Clinic. He retired in 1987 as a renowned veterinarian and expert in ethology. Dr. Miller has lectured in every continent leading a revolution in natural horsemanship which emerged in the Western USA along with Imprint Training of newborn foals. He has received numerous professional awards for his involvement with equine associations, production of videotapes, and lecturing. He writes books and has contributed seven veterinary cartoon books helping us laugh at ourselves. Dr. Miller has contributed *Mind Over Miller* and is on the editorial staff of [Veterinary Medicine](#), *Modern Veterinary Practice*, *Veterinary Forum*, and [Western Horseman](#) and other horse magazines. He is the first large animal veterinarian to receive the Bustad Award and was named to the Hall of Fame by Western States Horse Expo in 2004.



Dr. Robert Miller at the Light Hands Horsemanship Event May, 2011. - photo by Debby Zarate.



**10:00AM -11:00AM Are Veterinarians Obligated to Provide Palliative Care?**

Are we obligated to offer further options than the “can do” or “there’s nothing we can (or will) do” medicine? Is it fair or is it ethical to send companion animals with life limiting disease or conditions home to wait until their quality of life dwindles down? Is the message, “bring her back for euthanasia when it’s her time” the wrong message to communicate to pet owners? Is it prudent for veterinarians to dismiss clients who decline “best treatment” options for their sick pets? There is a legal and ethical need for all practitioners to rethink the prevailing “either or” model and offer pet owners, rich or poor, the option of palliative care and pet hospice or a referral for these services for their sick companion animals as a viable third option?

**12:00PM-2:00PM ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION: PALLIATIVE AND HOPSICE CARE**

**By Alice Villalobos, DVM, DPNAP**

Alice Villalobos, DVM, DPNAP completed the first mock residency program in veterinary clinical oncology under the direction of Dr. Gordon H. Theilen while earning her doctorate at UCD in 1972. She was Founder and Medical Director of Coast Pet Clinic/Animal Cancer Center, a multispecialty clinic, in Hermosa Beach, CA for 24 years before joining Veterinary Centers of America. She is Director of Pawspice in Hermosa Beach and Animal Oncology Consultation Service in Woodland Hills, CA. She is a Distinguished Practitioner of The National Academies of Practice and Chair of the Veterinary Academy. She is a founding member of the Veterinary Cancer Society, the Association of Veterinary Family Practice and the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care. She is President of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics, past president of the American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians and editor-in-chief of their newsletters. She authored the textbook, ***Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond***, Blackwell Publishing in 2007, and writes ***The Bond and Beyond***, a column in Veterinary Practice News.



Dr. Alice Villalobos and husband, Ira, and family pets in 1985.

She founded the Peter Zippi Memorial Fund for Animals in 1977 which has rescued over 12,000 animals. She received the Bustad Award and the UC, Davis Alumni Achievement Award “for her pioneering role in bringing oncology services to companion animals.” She writes and lectures worldwide on: veterinary oncology, quality of life, palliative and hospice care, the human-animal bond and ethics. She introduced the concept of “Pawspice” which combines palliative care and kinder gentler standard care for pets diagnosed with cancer and other life-limiting disease.

**11:00AM - 12:00PM Companion Animals in Clinical Trials and Research**

Owners of companion animals and veterinarians seek methods for preventing and treating diseases. Veterinarians need accessible findings from appropriate research in order to practice evidence-based medicine. It is difficult to establish “Standards of Care” for surgical procedures, chemotherapeutic regimes, behavioral problems, and countless other problems when reliable and relevant scientific information is lacking. Owners might wonder if recommendations are sometimes based on, or at least influenced by, a veterinarian’s desire to generate revenue rather than sound evidence. For example, the profession cannot reach consensus on the frequency that dogs and cats need to be examined each year for wellness visits. Fearing a loss of revenue, the profession also holds on to procedures that might be better or more economically performed by well-trained paraprofessionals.

Many pet owners understand the importance of research and are willing to include their pet animals in clinical trials as long as they are not harmed in the process. But what are some of the challenges? Limited funding is a huge problem that leads to shortcuts. Incentives are often based on output (e.g., publications, overhead revenue brought to a university) rather than impact (e.g., outcomes that significantly change the lives of animals and/or people). There is hope for research that benefits both animals and people. Large, well-designed, randomized controlled trials have identified that smoking kills, that thinner dogs on restricted diets live longer than siblings given no food limits, that vaccinations are associated with sarcomas in cats, and that certain diets predispose to laminitis in horses. As veterinary and medical researchers work together in the One Medicine model, it is possible that future generations of man and animals might enjoy healthier and longer lives.

**By Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD, DACT**

Dr. Olson earned her DVM and master’s of science at the University of Minnesota and her PhD at Colorado State University. She is board certified by the American College of Theriogenologists and an organizing member of the newly forming American College of Animal Welfare. She is a Bustad Award Recipient and has been acknowledged with several other awards for her work to advance animal health and welfare. Dr. Olson has advised organizations, industries and governmental agencies around the world. She has taught Cornell, University of Minnesota and Colorado State University and held executive positions at Guide Dogs for the Blind, the American Humane Association and Morris Animal Foundation. She currently serves as Chief Veterinary Advisor for the American Humane Association and is tasked with launching a new Animal Welfare and Research Institute.



Patty Olson & her cat, Henry

**2:00PM -3:00PM****Ethics, Politics, Honesty, Economics, Openness, Collegiality, Responsibility and Leadership in the VIN Community**

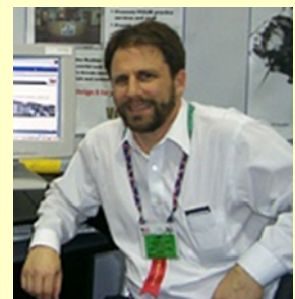
Being asked to present this topic represents a paradox and an ethical dilemma. Writing/talking about VIN in an educational forum, by definition, represents a potential conflict of interest and could be misconstrued as a commercial message. I reluctantly accepted the invitation as a vote of confidence (from the leadership of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics) that I would honor what I call the “responsibility of the lectern.” Presenters of information are entrusted with this responsibility. It is their duty to honor that trust by recognizing that they are not immune to potential conflicts of interest. This is an issue that I believe we have not confronted adequately in our veterinary schools and CE lecture halls, within our practices, within our veterinary organizations or within our literature/peer review system.

POTENTIAL conflicts that we point to most often relate to the promotion of the products and services we use in our practices and the manner in which the data and conclusions supporting use of those products and services are supported, conducted, analyzed, reported, and disseminated. It is important to recognize that all of us are in positions of leadership and must take seriously that responsibility of the lectern, whether it be how we interact with our staff, clients, or colleagues who are constituents of organizations we have been entrusted to guide.

Put two veterinarians in a room and they are certain to have an idea. Unfortunately, the next thought is usually, “who can we get to sponsor our project?” I say unfortunately because my observation is that whether the idea is a research project, meeting, association, publication or other activity, to sustain long-term a project needs to be self-supporting. Without that component, the future of the project remains susceptible to the fortunes and whims of the sponsoring entity or entities. And, with few exceptions, with each renewal of support comes added conditions. It can be a slippery slope. As the VIN community evolves and the founding generation makes way for the next generation, a primary focus must be ensuring adherence to the Ten Commandments of VIN and a belief that maintaining independence of thought and action requires that the VIN community be self-supporting.

**By Paul D. Pion, DVM, DipACVIM (Cardiology)**

Dr. Pion holds a B.S. and a D.V.M. from Cornell University and is board certified as a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine. He interned at the Animal Medical Center, completed a residency in Cardiology at UC Davis, a post-doctorate in Pharmacology at Columbia University, and coursework and research toward his PhD at UC Davis. Paul founded Veterinary Information Network with Dr. Duncan Ferguson in 1991. Paul has worked full-time at VIN since 1993 and is the Chief Executive Officer, President, and a director of VIN. Prior to that, he was a full-time instructor and researcher at the University of California, Davis where he also practiced veterinary medicine and was responsible for breakthrough veterinary medical research on taurine deficiency related heart disease in cats.



Paul D. Pion  
Veterinary Information  
Network

Among many honors, Paul has received a Physician Scientist Award from the National Institutes of Health, a Ralston Purina Small Animal Research Award, a National Phi Zeta Award and a Special Recognition Award from the American Animal Hospital Association. He has published extensively, including a cover article for the journal, *Science*, announcing a finding that elucidated the cause, cure, and ultimate elimination of a common and fatal feline heart ailment via reformulation of commercial feline diets to contain enough taurine. Paul co-authored a book for cat owners, *Cats for Dummies*. He loves to fly small airplanes and lives and works at VIN headquarters in Davis, California with his veterinarian wife, Carla, 2 sons, a daughter, and numerous pets.

**3:00PM –4:00PM****Declawing, Devoicing, Desexing and other Animal Issues**

Veterinarians are currently challenged by a number of contentious issues related to our interactions with animals. An example is the conflicting situations presented to a veterinarian who is asked by a client to perform procedures such as declawing or devoicing which may not always be advantageous to the animals. In these conditions the veterinarian may feel torn between an obligation towards a client and a decision that takes into consideration the best interests of the animal.

In many cases these questions are resolved after considering the preferences of the client and, perhaps secondarily, the benefits to the veterinarian. Unless we are presented with a unique situation, little attention is paid to the well-being of the animal. We do recognize that each case should be handled individually, as there may be specific circumstances which may make our decision lean one way or the other. In any case, it is important that veterinarians make their recommendations taking into consideration the interests of both the client and the patient.

**By Jose M. Peralta DVM, MSc, PhD**

Jose M. Peralta, DVM, MSc, PhD, is Associate Professor, Animal Welfare and Veterinary Ethics, College of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona CA 91766. He earned his DVM degree in Spain from the University of Zaragoza in 1988. Peralta earned his MSc in Animal Science at Cornell University in 1994 and received his Ph.D. in Animal Science at Cornell University in 1997 while advancing his special interest in the arena of ethics and animal welfare.

Dr. Peralta is serving as a Committee Member and Contributor for the SVME on line CE Ethics Course.

**4:00PM -5:00PM****Does the Pay or Kill Policy Drive Over Charging & Over Treatment?**

Practitioners might be unaware that they manipulate clients with body language, rhetoric, repetition and urgency to follow plan A or B in the either or model which is essentially the Pay or Kill model when other options are not readily forthcoming. Distressed pet owners definitely feel pressured to pay the prepared estimate or kill (opt for euthanasia) their beloved pet at many veterinary facilities. This scenario is often the situation found at specialty clinics and especially at busy emergency clinics.

By withholding palliative options for sick and injured companion animals, veterinarians may be forcing families to pay more money than they can afford which might lead them unknowingly to elect over treatment. Often the only other alternative is for pet owners to reluctantly elect early euthanasia, a choice which may haunt them forever. By withholding options, the doctor and the practice is exerting unfair and powerful persuasion creating a dilemma of heartbreak for clients. Is this Pay or Kill policy ethical?



**By Alice Villalobos, DVM, DPNAP**



***Ethical Considerations for Service Animals  
and those Animals utilized in Therapeutic Settings***

Alan M. Beck, Sc.D.  
Dorothy N. McAllister Professor of Animal Ecology  
School of Veterinary Medicine  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, Indiana

The paramount ethical considerations for service and therapy animals are no different from the concerns society has for all animals—are the animals treated with the respect they deserve? There is now general acceptance that animals can provide service to individuals and can play important roles in therapeutic settings. Society recognizes the human-animal bond. This bond must be bi-directional, with each party to the bond benefitting in ways that are significant. Critics question the utilitarian emphasis of service animals and animal-assisted therapy. They are concerned that service animals are viewed as mere “tools” without respect for their inherent worth.

It should be appreciated that improving the utility of animals adds value to their existence and therefore to their protection. It is naïve to believe that companion and domesticated animals will thrive in a world that had no value for them. Animals assisting people in need is not enough—the animal’s utility to people must never include psychological or physical abuse. Whatever discomfort that is absolutely necessary such as a harness, saddle or vest, should be clearly balanced with benefits that serve the animal.

Alan Beck is Director of the Center of the Human Animal Bond and the Dorothy N. McAllister Professor of Animal Ecology at the Purdue School of Veterinary Medicine, Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN. Beck was educated at Brooklyn College, California State University at Los Angeles and the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health. His research and extensive publications have contributed to the emerging knowledge base in areas such as: Human-animal interactions; animals and human health; animal behavior; human behavior with animals; animal bite and attack behavior; animal bite and attack epidemiology; rabies epidemiology; human attitudes towards animals; humane attitudes towards wildlife; animals and child development; animal use in therapeutic settings and biomedical ethics.



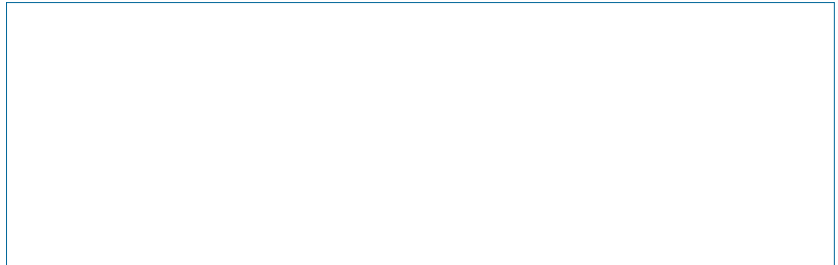
Website: <http://www.vet.purdue.edu/chab> Human-Animal Bond/Animal Ecology

**Alan M. Beck, Sc.D.**





c/o  
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## SVME Mission Statement

The Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics was founded in 1994 by a group of veterinarians, biomedical researchers and academics to promote discussion and debate about ethical issues arising in and relevant to veterinary practice. The SVME publishes a newsletter, provides a listserv, holds an annual meeting at the AVMA convention, sponsors an annual student essay contest and honors an individual annually with the Shomer Award for outstanding contributions to veterinary medical ethics.

*Individuals interested in information or in joining the SVME can visit the SVME website below to learn more about the organization.*

[www.svme.org/](http://www.svme.org/)

