

SVME NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics

Volume 5, Number 3

October 1999

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message, page 1-2

Treasurer's Report, page 2

*President-Elect's Message,
page 3*

Editor's Comments, page 3

News of Interest, page 4

Member News, page 4

*Review: Veterinary Medical
Ethics in North Dakota,
page 4-5*

Notice of Death, page 5

*Minutes from the Annual Meeting
in New Orleans, page 6-7*

*Photo of Plenary Session
Speakers at Annual Meeting,
page 7*

Web Site Information, page 8

SVME Officers, page 8

*Society Newsletter Mailing
Address, page 8*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm pleased to see that we've had some good discussions of late on the VETETHIC discussion list. Topics sort of run together and spill over into several forums so it's sometimes hard to remember exactly where they occurred. As I recall we've recently hit on Peter Singer's ethical and employment positions. I've been amazed at how much interest Singer's Princeton University appointment generated in several areas other than those specifically related to animals. Someone commented, perhaps Jerry Tannenbaum, that the more some of his (Singer's) opinions are aired, the less credibility they have. I agree with this. Ideas should be exposed to informed analysis and criticism. Wrong ideas cause problems when special interest groups shield them from such review. "Sunlight" kills them or cleans them. An academic philosopher friend of mine here at Mizzou said a while back that he was convinced that Singer was wrong in some of his conclusions about the moral status of animals, but that he wasn't sure just where it was he went wrong.

A while back I read Michael P. T. Leahy's *Against Liberation: Putting Animals in Perspective*, the paper back edition. Leahy is a Senior lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Kent. He has taken on Singer and the major animal liberationist philosophers toe to toe. Leahy has some compelling ideas that suggest that Singer and the others have gone wrong on their way to their conclusions by misconstruing the nature of nonhuman animals' cognitive and language capabilities, at least. His arguments put an academic foundation under the subtitle of a November 1990 *Audubon* article by Richard Conniff. The article title is "Fuzzy-Wuzzy Thinking About Animal Rights." The particular subtitle that Leahy so robustly supports is "The movement [animal rights movement] has elevated ignorance about the natural world almost to the level of a philosophical principle." I encourage everyone interested in animal ethical issues to read Leahy's book. It's important to get the paper back edition because it contains a delightful

(Continued on next page)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(continued from page 1)

"Afterword" that is Leahy's responses to criticisms of the book by Singer, Ryder, Clark, *et al.* I am astonished, and disappointed, that this book hasn't gotten greater notoriety.

Another VETETHIC topic that I found fascinating was the one about just how much service a practitioner can ethically offer a pet owner, and the implications that the outcome have on the perception of the appropriateness of the level, and cost, of the services offered. Part of my day job involves working with physicians and other health care providers who use animals in research and education, and some that also use human subjects in research. This is a great case about how much service is justified is a great one for veterinary school discussion. During the VETETHIC discussion I was thinking about some aspects that this case shares with some human health care and end of life issues that the human health care folks deal with regularly.

In the aftermath of the infamous Tuskegee syphilis studies, and as a part of the apology by President Clinton for the United States, the Tuskegee University was awarded a substantial

sum of money to create a National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care. There's much more background information at the Center's web site at URL: <http://www.tubioethics.tusk.edu/> <http://www.tubioethics.tusk.edu/>. Of particular interest to SVME members may be that within the Center is developing a program focusing on the bioethics of several aspects of veterinary medicine. A conference on these issues is planned for November 19-20, 1999. It's my understanding that the conference leaders are inviting at least one faculty member and one student from each U. S. College of veterinary medicine to hear leading speakers on such topics as the role of animals in our society, bioethics in veterinary practice, bioethics in teaching, and teaching bioethics. It looks like there'll be ample opportunity for discussion in breakout sessions.

I extend my profound thanks to Sylvie Cloutier, PhD, for taking on the responsibilities as Editor of the SVME newsletter.

Ronald M. McLaughlin, DVM
President, SVME

TREASURER'S REPORT

As of October 1st the balance is \$8,371.41. The only record expenses have been for printing and mailing. However, there may be some expense claims from the annual meeting in New Orleans that have not been presented.

The total membership is 236 persons of which 147 have paid their 1999-2000 dues. Hopefully the response from this newsletter will bring in most of the outstanding dues.

Please send your membership payment to Baseline Animal Clinic Ltd, 220 E. Baseline Road, Tempe, AZ 85283

Hal L. Jenkins, DVM
Treasurer, SVME

PRESIDENT-ELECT'S MESSAGE

It is a pleasure to serve the Society of Veterinary Medical Ethics as president-elect. Our organization has the opportunity to serve the profession in important ways. Through the efforts of Dr. Al Dorn, we now provide an excellent ethics program at the AVMA annual meeting. It was pleasing to see a good attendance at the sessions in New Orleans. With advanced marketing, we hope to fill the room for the ethics program in Salt Lake City. There will be some outstanding speakers and ample opportunity for dialogue with colleagues. As the program becomes finalized, we will provide advanced notice of seminar topics so that members can make plans to attend.

The SVME also provides an excellent venue for the exchange of ideas on ethical topics of interest to our members and the profession. The number of different issues that have been analyzed within the past year on our VETETHIC list is remarkable. There are many ethical issues facing the profession. The findings of the recent AVMA/AAHA/AAVMC veterinary market study will no doubt stimulate additional dialogue. Our profession is at a juncture in its evolution. As our leaders chart the future of the profession, it is important that they and we keep

our professional values in mind. As a profession and as individual veterinarians, how do we sustain our ethical standards in the face of challenging socioeconomic opportunities?

The SVME is making efforts to involve students by providing funds to support ethics programs at veterinary colleges. Although ethics is not generally a popular course in the veterinary curriculum, it is important that our future colleagues engage in professional ethical issues. They soon will be resolving them and need to become aware of the ramifications of their decisions. Students enjoy hearing from and talking with practitioners. For those of you that are so inclined, volunteer to present an ethics case at your local veterinary college. You will find it a very enjoyable experience.

The officers of SVME welcome suggestions on activities or programs to improve the organization and its effectiveness. Forward your suggestions to Drs. McLaughlin and Draper. We look forward to interacting with the members this year.

Don Draper, DVM
President-Elect, SVME

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Last month, I agreed to take on the difficult task of being the editor of SVME. It will not be easy to replace Jerry Tannenbaum. He did a wonderful job for the past year as the editor of the society. I want to carry on all the advances that Jerry developed and bring some of my own. On behalf of the Society, I wish Jerry a speedy recovery.

The first steps I took in order to pursue on Jerry's advances was to give back the Newsletter the appearance it had been given by Jerry. This issue, and the following ones, will also be available electronically. Distributing the Newsletter electronically will allow us to save a considerable amount of money in printing and mailing costs. All members who wish to receive a hard-copy of the newsletter instead of, or in addition to, the electronic version may do so.

I urge all SVME members to consider contributing to the newsletter. The next issue will be printed in January 2000. Please let me know if there is a book you would like to review, an opinion piece you would like to write, or a news item that you would like included in the newsletter. All members are also invited to submit information about their professional activities.

I can be contacted at <scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu> or c/o Department of VCAPP, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, PO Box 646520, Pullman, WA, 99164-6520.

Sylvie Cloutier, PhD
Editor, SVME

NEWS OF INTEREST

The students of University of Pennsylvania are actively working to form an SVME student chapter.



In memory of Dr. Leo K. Bustad, Dean and Professor Emeritus of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University, a Pin Oak tree was planted in front of Bustad Hall, the college main building. Dr. Bustad died on September, 19, 1998. Dr. Bustad is remembered for his great compassion, dynamic leadership and pioneering role in forging new partnerships between people, animals and the natural environment.



New course on Rights and Welfare of Animals:

I am offering a course entitled "The Rights and Welfare of Animals" through the Washington State University Extended Degree Program. The course is offered over the internet using a discussion forum called the Speakeasy Cafe. Topics covered include historical attitudes towards animals, animal behavior, cognition and consciousness, rights-based and utilitarian philosophies, and controversies surrounding the use and treatment of animals in agriculture, research, education, sports, and as companions. This is a second-year undergraduate course of the Department of Animal Sciences. Typically, there are undergraduate students of all levels taking this course. Emphasis is placed on exposure to

different points of view, critical analysis and articulation of rational arguments. For further information, please contact me at rnewberry@wsu.edu.

Ruth C. Newberry, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor
Dept. of Animal Sciences and
Dept. of Veterinary and
Comparative Anatomy,
Pharmacology and Physiology
Center for the Study of
Animal Well-being
Washington State University

MEMBER NEWS

For those of you who are looking for Hillary Gorman, stop searching. Hillary was married in August 1999, and she is now Hillary Israeli. Congratulations!

VETERINARY MEDICAL ETHICS IN NORTH DAKOTA

Here's an interesting case that was presented to the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners recently. The names have been changed but the facts are the same.

Mr. and Mrs. Leingang are elderly clients of Dr. Vetter, a small animal practitioner. The Leingangs own several cats and have used Dr. Vetter as their veterinarian for many years. Mr. Leingang usually brings the cats to the hospital for veterinary care.

One of the cats, a Persian, develops a skin condition and Mr. Leingang takes it to Dr. Vetter's office, as requested by Mrs. Leingang. Dr. Vetter examines the cat and decides that castration would help with the

cat's recovery and prevent the problem from reoccurring. Mr. Leingang agrees and Dr. Vetter castrates the cat, and hospitalizes it to care for the skin condition.

Mrs. Leingang, upon hearing that the cat has been castrated, is very upset, because she had been planning to sell the cat for \$350 as a breeding animal. She goes in to Dr. Leingang's office and requests that the cat be euthanatized, because it is now worthless as a breeder. She also pays the \$25 euthanasia fee.

Mr. Leingang visits the cat daily while it is in the hospital, and refuses to have it euthanatized when he discovers that his wife has requested that this be done. Dr. Vetter does not

Continued on next page

ETHICS IN NORTH DAKOTA (CONTINUED)

euthanatize the cat. After the cat recovers, Dr. Vetter sends it home with Mr. Leingang, and it continues to live at the Leingang house to this day.

Because the Leingangs have an outstanding balance at the hospital (about \$140). Dr. Vetter's employer, the practice owner, does not refund the \$25 euthanasia fee, choosing instead to apply it to the balance owed his hospital.

Mrs. Leingang submits a complaint to the examining board, alleging that the castration was done without her consent, that the euthanasia was not done as she requested, and that her \$25 was not refunded to her when the euthanasia was not done. She also submits documents that indicate that Mr. Leingang is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It is also apparent from reading Mrs. Leingang's long handwritten letters that Mr. and Mrs. Leingang do not enjoy a happy marriage.

Dr. Vetter, in her response to the complaint, indicates that Mr. Leingang is the cat's owner of record, that he obviously cared for the cat, and that she was just doing what the owner requested.

The board decides that the issues in this case revolve around poor communication between the owner(s) of the cat and the veterinarian. The board dismisses the complaint against Dr. Vetter, but suggests that, in the future, she obtain signed consent forms prior to performing surgery on an animal, and that she and her employer consider returning the \$25 fee to Mrs. Leingang, given that the euthanasia was not done as she had requested.

Questions:

1. How does a veterinarian in practice determine who the owner of an animal is? Is it the person who presents the animal for care? Is the veterinarian obligated in any

way to get the consent of other family members before performing surgery or euthanasia?

2. If one "owner" requests euthanasia and another refuses, how does a veterinarian decide what to do? Was Dr. Vetter at fault for not euthanatizing the cat as requested (and paid for) by Mrs. Leingang?
3. Should Dr. Vetter have refunded the euthanasia fee, given that no euthanasia was done, even though the clients had an outstanding balance?

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD

Executive Secretary, North Dakota
Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
October 6, 1999

NOTICE OF DEATH

Dr. Robert (Bob) Shomer, cofounder of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics, veterinary colleague, friend and mentor passed away on Friday, October 15. He practiced veterinary medicine in Teaneck, NJ for 60 years and served not only the animal population but the veterinary profession with honor and dignity.

The funeral service was conducted Sunday, October 17, at Schoem's Menorah Chapel in Paramus, NJ.

Bob was a generous benefactor to many charitable causes, including the American Veterinary Medical Foundation. His commitment and dedication, friendship and guidance will be missed by many.

Reported by
Bob Gordon

Oakland Animal Hospital
Oakland, NJ

Note: Dr. Shomer's long list of accomplishments and service to the veterinary profession are too numerous to list at this late date. Please look for a complete memorial to Bob in our next issue.

MINUTES FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING IN NEW ORLEANS

Business Meeting of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics, July 10, 1999, New Orleans, LA

The meeting was convened at 4:45 PM in room 213 of the New Orleans Convention Center, by SVME President Bob Speth.

The minutes of the previous meeting were not available.

There was no old business.

New Business

Bob Speth brought up the issue of sponsoring student chapters of SVME. Al Dorn suggested that the outreach to students be less formal, and initially involve student interest groups in coordination with a regular SVME member. Jim Harris suggested that we solicit regular members at Colleges of Veterinary Medicine to serve as group leaders for these special interest groups. Once we have a list of volunteers and their permission to circulate their names, we would publicize their availability on VETETHIC and also through the SCAVMA publication "Intervet."

To foster student participation, the Society will contribute \$30.00 for food and non-alcoholic beverages for each meeting. Since costs could accumulate rapidly, we will place a limit of two meetings per College during the fall semester/quarter, and re-evaluate the arrangements for the winter/spring semester or quarters.

To assist with the development of the meetings, SVME members will be asked to provide ethical cases for discussion.

A motion to pursue this effort was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

The next issue was to establish a mechanism for continued publication for the newsletter. Bob Speth noted that Jerry Tannenbaum had resigned as Editor because of a severe back injury, which made it difficult for him to type at a computer. Bob Speth suggested that the Society contract with the Department of Veterinary and Comparative Anatomy (VCAPP) at Washington State University for the services of Jeanne Jensen, who

is the Editor for the department. Ms. Jensen has considerable experience and expertise at preparing newsletters using desktop publishing software. The Society would reimburse VCAPP at a rate of \$25 per hour for Ms. Jensen's services, up to a maximum of \$250 per issue of the newsletter, for 3 issues of the newsletter per year, starting in September 1999, continuing in January and May of 2000. The May issue of the newsletter will include a dues renewal notice as well.

A motion to approve this agreement was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

Bob Speth noted that an SVME member should act in the role of supervisory editor. Joe Bielitzki suggested that Jerry Tannenbaum be invited to continue as the supervisory editor, since Jeanne Jensen would be doing most of the computer work.

A motion to approve this agreement was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

Ron McLaughlin noted that if Jerry is unable to continue in the role of newsletter editor, that he (Ron) would take responsibility for finding a supervisory editor.

Al Dorn, the Interim Parliamentarian, put forth the slate of candidates for officer for SVME. There were: Don Draper for President-Elect, Hal Jenkins for Treasurer, and Al Dorn for Parliamentarian. The floor was opened for additional nominations for officers. No additional nominations were submitted and the nominations were closed. The candidates were voted into office by acclamation.

Hal Jenkins gave the Treasurer's report. The Society has a balance of \$7658.10 in its checking account as of July 8, 1999, and there are 222 members on the membership roster.

The Treasurer's report was accepted unanimously.

Al Dorn brought up the issue of the program for next year's annual meeting. The first issue was whether to have the plenary session continue to be a part of the regular AVMA program

Continued, next page

MINUTES (CONTINUED)

(mainstreamed), or to go back to having the meeting be that of an allied group that holds its meeting outside of the convention arena. Also, the question was raised as to whether to have the meeting last for a full day again. Bob Speth called for a vote of the members present on these questions. The vote was unanimous in favor of continuing to mainstream the SVME meeting into the regular AVMA program and for having the meeting be a full day again.

There was further discussion on the possible topics and scope of next year's meeting, e.g., discussion of ethics that are relevant to practitioners, another session on the animal rights issue,

and how ethics can help the bottom line of a practice. These comments were shared with Don Draper, who in his role as President-Elect, will Chair the Program Committee next year. The suggestion was made to solicit the SVME membership via VETETHIC for input on topics for next year's program.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 pm.

Members in attendance at the business meeting were: Bob Speth, Ron McLaughlin, Albert S. Dorn, James Harris, Donald D. Draper, Lynette Hart, Hal Jenkins, and Joe Bielitzki.

Bob Speth

Recorder of Minutes



Speakers at the Plenary session of the annual meeting (from left to right) are Don Draper, Kathy Earnest-Koons (Moderator), Ron McLaughlin, Donnie Self, Bob Speth and Joe Bielitzki.

NEWSLETTER ON WWW

This issue of the *SVME Newsletter* is the first that will be available on the new web site of the society. The newsletter is available at the new society web site: <http://www.geocities.com/~amazondoc/SVME.html>

All the future issues of the newsletter will also be posted on the web site. An announcement will be made on the VETETHIC list to inform you when each new issue is available.

Members who wish to receive a hard copy of the newsletter may do so by contacting newsletter editor Sylvie Cloutier at scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu.

SAME INFORMATION BUT NEW LOCATION

The society web site is moving. The address of the new site is:

<http://www.geocities.com/~amazondoc/SVME.html>

Not everything works or is updated yet, but the move should be completed soon and the site

fully functional. In case you forget about the move and visit the old site, there will be a notice at the old site.

Ione L. Smith, DVM
Secretary, SVME

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President: Ronald L. McLaughlin, DVM

President-Elect: Donald D. Draper, DVM, PhD, MBA

Treasurer: Hal L. Jenkins, DVM

Parliamentarian: Albert S. Dorn, DVM

Secretary: Ione Smith, DVM

Historian: Lawrence Carbone, DVM, MA

Immediate Past-President: Bob Speth, PhD

Past-Presidents: Robert Shomer, VMD

Albert Dorn, DVM, MS

Jerrold Tannenbaum, MA, JD

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD

Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics
Department of VCAPP
205 Wegner Hall
PO 646520
Pullman, WA 99164-6520