

SVME Newsletter

Newsletter of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics

Volume 10, Number 2

May 2004

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President's Message

Dear SVME Members,

My presidency of the society is almost over. In July at the AVMA meeting I will pass on the leadership of the society to Dr. Earl Dixon. It has been a good experience and great year! We have made a few changes to the management of the Society that I hope will help the society continue to grow and expand. For example, a few years ago we stopped sending the newsletter by mail and provided it on the society's web site. It is only this year, after talking to a few members that I realized how this change had a negative impact on the membership. That is another reason why I am asking you, as members of the society, to let us know what you think. I had set myself many goals this year. I was not expecting to reach all these goals and I did not. However, we have started to work on many of these goals and hopefully they will be reached in a near future. I believe that the more we can do this year, the easier it will be in the future to reach one of these goals. It is a long-term process and to succeed we have to start working on it right away.

Times are changing! It is election year in both US and Canada. We might see leadership changes. Gas is increasing in both US and Canada. We might see changes in the behaviour of the population and increase the awareness for protecting environment, wildlife. The big restaurant chains such as McDonald and Burger King have initiated changes in the management of production animals that increase the welfare of those animals. Moreover, the BSE event that happened in the US in early January has increased the awareness of the public to the conditions of farm animals. And more is happening! I believe SVME should be leading the way regarding the ethical issues related to these events and provide its members with the latest updates. This can not be done only by a few people. As members of the society we need to share our knowledge and our thoughts in order to grow bigger, stronger, and wiser.

I would like to thank Drs. Brian Forsgren (Past president), Earl Dixon

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President's Message

Continued...

(President-elect), Carol Morgan (Secretary and Historian), John Wright (Treasurer) and Robert Speth (Parliamentarian) and all the Society members. Everyone did a lot of work this year to keep the society growing. It was a great pleasure to work with all of you. It made my presidency so much easier!

I hope to see many of you at the AVMA meeting in July. Do not forget to stop by the Ethics session and while you are there why not stay for the SVME business meeting that will be held right after the session. Let us know what you have to say about the Society and veterinary ethics.

Respectfully submitted
Sylvie Cloutier, Ph.D
SVME President

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's and Membership Committee Report is a combined report this time because the SVME treasurer is chair of the membership committee. As of May 14, 2004 the checking account balance is \$997.52. The savings account balance as of May 14, 2004 is \$22,407.32.

Since our last newsletter was sent, each member should have received a copy of the book, Veterinary Bioethics in the Twenty First Century. This book is the result of a conference on bioethics that took place at Tuskegee University in 1999. The distribution of this book was made possible through the generosity of SVME President-Elect, Earl Dixon. Also included with the book were two SVME brochures with the hope that our members would have a resource to explain to others what SVME is about, and possibly recruit new members. I thank all of you who have recruited new members to SVME.

Dues for July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005 will be due on July 10. Dues notices will be sent to all members who have not already paid for that dues period in June.

The SVME membership committee, and board welcomes, and encourages constructive criticism, and suggestions that members think will help the SVME serve your needs for the promotion of dialogue relative to ethics in veterinary medical practice.

Respectfully submitted
John S. Wright, DVM
SVME treasurer, and Chair Membership
Committee

The AVMA Annual Convention Philadelphia Ethics Sessions, Sunday, July 25, 2004

Moderator- Dr. Earl Dixon

Room 104 A

Dr. James Wilson 8 am – 9:30 am

*\$250K in Emotional Distress Damages for
the Loss of a Pet*

Dr. Duane Flemming 10 am – 11:30 am

*Animal Ownership versus Animal
Guardianship*

Dr. David Fraser 1 pm – 2:30 pm

*Understanding Animal Welfare: Science in
a Cultural Context*

Dr. Tim Blackwell 3 pm – 4:30 pm

*Animal Welfare and Swine Production:
Incentives for Change*

SVME Annual Meeting and Election 5 pm

***All members are strongly encouraged to
attend the SVME annual meeting
following the ethics sessions.***

Ethics in Veterinary Practice

The old cliché affirming that “everyone is talking about the weather, but no one seems to do anything about it” holds inversely regarding ethics in veterinary medicine. “Everyone does ethics, but no one seems to talk about it.” In the 1980s, Dr. Marvin Samuelson showed that what had to be described as ethics decision-making occupies the single largest portion of a practitioner’s time, yet education in ethics is scarce in veterinary schools!

By Bernard E. Rollin Ph.D

**University Distinguished
Professor
Professor of Philosophy
Professor of Animal Sciences
Professor of Biomedical Sciences
Colorado State University**

There is certainly no shortage of ethical issues in veterinary medicine. I have written a monthly column responding to practitioner-originated ethical cases in the Canadian Veterinary Journal since 1990; there is no sign that the flow is diminishing. I have edited a bimonthly ethics column in Veterinary Forum that is now going to appear monthly due to reader interest.

Resolving an ethical issue is strikingly similar to dealing with a medical problem. In medicine, one must first diagnose and then treat; in ethics, one must identify all relevant ethical issues before attempting ethical adjudication. Failing to identify all relevant ethical nuances of a situation guarantees poor ethical resolution. For example, at CSU we confronted a situation where a client had struck his wife’s dog in the head with a frying pan for “barking too much.” At his wife’s insistence, and at the suggestion of the family’s veterinarian, he brought the comatose animal to our hospital, boasting about what he had done. When the dog died and was sent to necropsy, the pathologist told the students all the details of the case. It happened that one student worked as a cruelty investigator for the local humane society and told his bosses, who sent out an officer. The client, the referring veterinarian, and all the University clinicians threatened the student, and said there was only one issue here -- client confidentiality. Only after much dialogue did these clinicians see that there were a plethora of other ethical issues—animal cruelty; what students were being taught about cruelty; whether and to what extent records are and ought to be confidential in a publicly supported teaching hospital; whether veterinarians were morally obliged to report suspected cruelty; whether it was appropriate for clinicians to threaten the student; whether being a cruelty investigator created a conflict of interest situation for a veterinary student, and so on.

The best way to analyze a situation into its many ethical components is to engage in dialogue with people of diverse interests; in this case lawyers, animal rights advocates, students. Failing that, I have identified five questions a veterinarian should ask herself or himself in any ethically charged situation:

1. Does the case raise questions of ethical obligation to clients?
2. Does the case raise questions of ethical obligation to animals?

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Ethics in Veterinary Practice *continued*

3. Does the case raise questions of ethical obligation to society as a whole? (As in reportable disease situations)
4. Does the case raise questions of ethical obligation to peers and the profession? (As when one finds a colleague's error)
5. Does the case raise question of ethical obligation to oneself?

Once the case has been satisfactorily analyzed into all relevant components, one should look to one's, "bag of ethical principles" – "don't lie"; "don't steal"; "don't take advantage of people"; "be charitable," etc. The problem is that a given case may call forth conflicting ethical principles, both of which fit the situation! Suppose a very old couple devoted to their dog bring the dog in with a lesion that turns out to be cancer, and ask, "Could we have saved Fifi if we had brought her in earlier, when we first noticed the lesion"? Suppose that is indeed the case. Here there is clearly a conflict of principles: If you tell the truth, you hurt them deeply and they experience significant guilt. If you lie, you violate a basic moral precept.

One adjudicates such conflicts by appeal to ethical theory; in essence, higher order principles. Sometimes one looks to our social ethical theory, as encoded in law. But, often, as in this case, one looks to one's personal ethical theory. A very common theory is utilitarian: ask in such cases which choice produces the greatest amount of pleasure (or benefit) and/or minimizes pain (or harm). That is called utilitarian ethical theory. On the other hand, other theories which are right and duty-oriented, rather than result-oriented, may say, as Kant does, that lying is always wrong, regardless of how much benefit is produced or harm prevented. So practitioners need to work through, at least tentatively, their own ultimate principles or theory.

Equally important, veterinarians must regularly monitor the social consensus ethic and be in accord with it.

Equally important, veterinarians must regularly monitor the social consensus ethic and be in accord with it; ideally, they need to be proactively ahead of where the society is going. It is very clear, and has been so for a decade, that people ever-increasingly think of their animals as "members of the family." Divorces often

involve bitter struggles over custody of the animal; lonely old people often find caring for the animal a reason to get up in the morning; single or divorced urban newcomers may find that the animal is the only source of love in their lives.

Given such a role for animals, even an older veterinarian, trained to ignore or even shun analgesia, needs to rethink such a position. Many clients take post-surgical analgesia for granted, and would not even bring animals to a veterinarian who was unconcerned about animal pain. Indeed, organized veterinary medicine needs to rethink its reactionary posture on confinement agriculture—such as supporting sow stalls—at a time when the public expects veterinary medicine to lead in animal welfare. (This expectation is

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Ethics in Veterinary Practice *continued*

manifest in federal laws for laboratory animals, which makes laboratory animal veterinarians the guardians of animal welfare in research, and which has substantially raised the salaries of these veterinarians.) In this regard, every veterinarian must decide his or her answer to what I call the Fundamental Question of Veterinary Ethics—to whom does the veterinarian morally owe primary allegiance; owner or animal?

Lastly, whereas we see thinking as a solitary activity (witness Rodin's statue of The Thinker), the Greeks more accurately saw thinking as a dialogue. There is no better way to resolve and analyze an ethical question than to discuss it with others. Given that practitioners don't work in a vacuum, but employ junior veterinarians, receptionists, technicians, bookkeepers, etc., and often have partners, setting up something like formalized ethics rounds or group discussions is a reasonable policy. Not only will the veterinarian get the benefit of diverse opinion, he or she will, through such an activity, help meld the practice into a more cohesive unit with better morale. Staff often have strong but unvoiced opinions on ethically charged situations; solicitation of dialogue can be a first-rate team-builder.

Call for Nominations

President-Elect

1. The President-Elect shall assume all duties of the President when the President is absent or unable to perform these duties
2. The President-Elect shall perform all duties as may be assigned by the President
3. Upon completion of the term of the President, the President elect shall automatically assume the office of the President for the next term of office. In the absence of the President, or in the event of disability, inability, or refusal to act, the President-Elect shall assume the office of President with full powers there of
4. If the office of President-Elect becomes vacant, a special election of the membership shall be called to elect a replacement
5. The President-Elect shall serve as chair of the Program Committee and be responsible to organize and implement the program for the next annual meeting

Historian

1. The Historian will be elected in even numbered years and will serve for a term of two years
2. The Historian is a member of the Board of Directors with all the rights and responsibilities described herein.
3. In case of a vacancy of this office, the President will appoint a replacement.
4. The Historian shall maintain an archive or file of materials and papers related to veterinary ethics.
5. The Historian shall chair the Education and Archives Committee of the society.

Call for Nominations

Secretary

1. The Secretary of the Society shall provide for the keeping of the minutes of all general meetings, executive committee meetings and special committee meetings
2. The Secretary shall give or cause to be given appropriate notices in accordance with this constitution or as required by law, and shall act as custodian of all society records and reports. The Secretary shall oversee the society seal or logo, assuring that it is affixed, when required by law, to do comments executed on behalf of the society
3. The Secretary shall perform all duties incident to the office, and such other duties as may be assigned from time to time by the President.
4. The Secretary shall be responsible for all publications of the society
5. The Secretary shall be elected at the annual meeting with the term of office being one year. The Secretary may be reelected at the discretion of the membership. In case of vacancy of this office, the President shall appoint a replacement to serve until the next general meeting when an election will be held
6. The Secretary shall be chair of the Awards Committee of the society.

Treasurer

1. The Treasurer shall collect dues and fees and be custodian of all funds of the society. The Treasurer shall present an annual report to the membership on the financial status of the society.
2. The Treasurer shall cause to be kept correct and accurate, accounts of the properties and financial transactions of the society and in general, perform all duties incident to the office.
3. The Treasurer shall keep or cause to be kept a roster showing the names of members in good standing of the society and their addresses, and make this roster available to other officers.
4. The Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting with the term of office being one year. The Treasurer may be reelected at the discretion of the membership. In case of a vacancy of this office, the President shall appoint a replacement to serve until the next general meeting when an election will be held.
5. The Treasurer shall chair the Membership Committee of the Society.

If you are interested in one of the positions, or would like to nominate someone for an office, please contact Dr. Sylvie Cloutier, SVME President (scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu), Dr. Bob Speth,, SVME Parliamentarian (speth@turbonet.com), or Dr. Carol Morgan, SVME Secretary (camorgan@shaw.ca). The officers will be elected at the annual meeting held in Philadelphia, PA, July 25, 2004.

Pet, Pest, or Pâté? The Role of Animals and the Obligations of Veterinarians

By Carol Morgan DVM

Leading up to the World Cup 2002, animal advocacy groups distributed petitions encouraging sports fans and animal lovers to boycott the soccer matches taking place in Korea. The reason behind the boycott was the Korean custom of eating dogs.

To many in North America, the thought of eating dog meat generates feelings of disgust. Imagine if you will, a family adopting a Golden Retriever from the SPCA, feeding her well, treating her humanely, and then slaughtering her for dinner. It is hard to say how the legal system would react but the public outrage would be inevitable. Yet this situation is very common with another animal considered as having relatively similar cognitive abilities - the pig. Condemning the practice of eating dog while engaging in the practice of eating pork illustrates the importance of social context. Social norms and cultural acceptance of certain practices, places constraints on how we treat and use animals. For this reason, it is important for veterinarians to understand that both owner and society determine the role of the animal, and that this affects the way veterinarians practice.

On the macro level, society determines *generally* the roles of different species. Dogs and cats are pets, while cattle and pigs are food. Tradition, history, capabilities of the animals (useful in hunting or herding for example), and simplicity of care and husbandry when used for meat or fiber are all factors involved in forming the role of an animal in society. Within a society the role of a species may be fairly well defined but individual animals within the society may be accorded substantially different roles and thus treatment. On this micro level, individual owners determine their animal's role. For example, dogs are never considered food (in North America), are pests only under extreme conditions when they run in packs, and are usually pets with the occasional exception of working dogs.

Veterinarians routinely experience the discrepancy between the macro level of role determination (society) and the micro level (the client). Society regards cats as companions and accordingly cats often receive premium care. However, a farmer with barn cats may consider the cats a necessary evil, leaving them to find their own food, rarely providing medical care, and resorting to drowning excess kittens. Although our society has determined that cats as a *species* are companions, the farmer, in our example, defines her barn cats as tools; i.e. her *relationship* with her cats is not one of companionship.

The variability in bonds between clients and patients is something that plagues veterinarians. I once examined a dog for hind limb lameness. As I struggled slightly with the dog to palpate her stifle, she voided a large amount of bloody urine. When advising the client, a physician, that his dog had a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament plus gross hematuria, the client mentioned that he was aware of the hematuria and treated the dog periodically with antibiotics. He went on to say that he was not interested in surgery for the stifle or pursuing the chronic recurrent hematuria, as the dog was "not that special". Although dogs are 'man's best friend', this particular dog was 'just a dog'. Veterinarians often find themselves modifying treatment plans based on the client's interpretation of the bond with the animal. In veterinary practice we often feel paralyzed in our treatment of animals based on the willingness of the owner, or how they value their relationship with their animal. Other than advising and educating a client about the

Pet, Pest, or Pâté? The Role of Animals and the Obligations of Veterinarians *continued*

options available, veterinarians often consider the client's decisions final and beyond his or her control. How does this square with our societal notions of responsibility to our companions?

As professionals and healers, veterinarians need to reinforce client's obligations to provide care for their animals. However, the question remains – what exactly are our obligations to our animals? Other than basic necessities, what, if anything, do pet owners owe their pets? Although some requirements for care are imbedded in legislation in some areas, the guidelines for care are usually very minimal. For example the BC Prevention or Cruelty to Animals Act requires that animals should be provided food, water, and shelter. There is no formal requirement for providing other needs. In general companion animals are accorded significant status in our society, however in reality the care accorded these animals within society can vary significantly and generally the level of care is not clearly defined.

Are clients obligated to feed their animals? Are clients obligated to vaccinate their animals? Are clients obligated to treat flea infestations? Are clients obligated to ensure a fracture is repaired? Are they obligated to provide chemotherapy when their pet is diagnosed with moderately responsive neoplasia? Are there minimal expectations of care that apply to both the owner of barn cats and the owner of cat acting as a surrogate child? Veterinarians and the profession as a whole need to engage society in a debate regarding our care duties to animals and research in this area is needed. Clearly delineating care expectations of animal owners will:

1. assist potential pet owners in recognizing the magnitude and breadth of expectation that society places on them with respect to the care of a pet,
2. will assist humane organizations, pet breeders, and pet traders (pet stores etc.) in educating potential pet owners of their obligations,
3. assist the legal system in adjudicating abuse and neglect cases, and
4. potentially reduce the burden on SPCAs and their donors by ensuring that pet owners adopt a more responsible view of their obligations to their pets, thereby reducing neglect investigations and relinquished pets.

By clearly understanding what is expected of animal owners in our society in relation to medical care, veterinarians and the profession as a whole can actively pursue their obligations as healers.

Understanding our obligations to animals is a dynamic process that involves partnership with humane organizations, animal owners and veterinarians. As part of satisfying our professional obligation to society, the veterinary profession should continue to work at developing, as well as adhering to, established norms of care with respect to our patients. In the long run, this commitment to animal well being will ensure the profession maintains or improves its positive image allowing veterinarians to enjoy practice.

Academic Position Advertisement:

Assistant Professor/Director of People-Pet Partnership

The successful candidate will be expected to conduct research in the area of human-animal interactions, particularly as applied to veterinary medicine, to administer community service and educational programs related to the human-animal bond, and to teach a course(s) in the DVM curriculum related to human-animal interactions, personal development, and ethics. **Minimum Qualifications:** A Ph.D. degree in a discipline related to animal well-being, animal behavior and/or human-animal interactions is required (e.g., psychology, animal science, zoology). The candidate must have a demonstrated ability to conduct research on human-animal interactions that relates specifically to veterinary education or the practice of veterinary medicine and to publish this work in peer-reviewed journals. The candidate must provide evidence of extramural funding for this research and for community service programs. The candidate must have a minimum of 5 years experience in managing research projects and community service programs, including budgetary, personnel, and promotional considerations. A minimum of 2 years experience in animal-assisted therapy in institutional settings (e.g., hospital, care facilities, at-risk youth programs) and in the management of a NARHA Premier Accredited Center or equivalent is expected. The candidate must have extensive experience (a minimum of 3 years) in teaching courses in an accredited DVM curriculum on human-animal interactions, ethics, personal development and leadership, as well as experience in course development at the undergraduate and/or graduate level in the following subjects: ethology and comparative psychology, ethics in veterinary medicine, and human-animal interactions. **Preferred Qualifications:** The candidate should have the demonstrated ability to design, implement, and manage coursework predicated on the humane treatment of animals (printed and online). The candidate should have extensive experience in working with dogs and horses and be able to select and train appropriate animals. The candidate should provide evidence of presentations to lay and professional audiences of topics pertaining to human-animal interactions. **Rank:** Assistant Professor, permanent, full-time, non-tenured faculty position, full benefit package. **Salary:** Commensurate with qualifications. Send letter of intent, curriculum vitae, and the names, addresses, email addresses and phone numbers of 3 references to:

Becky Morton,
College of Veterinary Medicine,
Washington State University,
PO BOX 646520, Pullman, WA 99164-6520
or bmorton@wsu.edu.

Application review begins 07/01/04. Position to begin Fall 2004. FEO/AA/ADA

Officers of the Society

<i>President</i>	<i>Sylvie Cloutier Ph.D</i>
<i>President Elect</i>	<i>Earl Dixon Ph.D</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>John Wright DVM</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Carol Morgan DVM</i>
<i>Parliamentarian</i>	<i>Bob Speth Ph.D</i>
<i>Historian</i>	<i>Carol Morgan DVM</i>
<i>Past-President</i>	<i>Brian Forsgren DVM</i>

SVME Membership

We appreciate your past support and look forward to a new and even better year for the Society. Yearly membership runs July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2003. The dues payment of \$25.00 (\$5.00 for students) is payable to:

Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics or SVME.

Send checks and the below form to:

SVME
c/o John S. Wright, DVM
Dept of Small Animal Clinical Sciences
College of Veterinary Medicine
C339 Veterinary Teaching Hospital
1352 Boyd Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108

Payment Date: _____ Check Number: _____

Please return this form with your dues payment (see amount above) to help us keep our records up to date. Membership renewal for 2004-2005 is due July 2004. Membership forms are also available at http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org_SVME/member_ap.htm

NAME and ADDRESS CORRECTION IF NECESSARY:

NAME _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (_____) _____

FAX NUMBER: (_____) _____

ELECTRONIC MAIL ADDRESS:

Check this box • if you are not on VETETHIC and would like to be. (Email address is required)

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