

## EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

# VMTH RESCUE TEAM ON CALL TO AID ANIMALS

The school's Veterinary Emergency Response Team (VERT), which includes faculty, staff and student volunteers trained and experienced in emergency medicine and rescue techniques, has been involved in numerous animal rescue operations for more than a decade—from helping local animals to assisting faraway communities that experience disasters such as North Carolina's Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

For example, last summer Placer County Sheriffs called VERT, based at the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital (VMTH), in June with a request to rescue an Arabian gelding. The horse had fallen from a narrow trail and landed on a ledge 800 feet below. The UC Davis team outfitted the horse with a specially designed sling, and he was airlifted to safety. In August, Nellie, a mule from the Pine Creek Pack Station fell about 100 feet off a rain-slickened trail near Bishop, California, sustaining a fractured pelvis and leg wound. Bishop veterinarian David Doonan (UC Davis, DVM, 1990) joined packers and Department of Forestry rangers to aid the stranded mule, treating her wounds and bringing in food, but they were unable to get Nellie off the mountain. Dr. Doonan called VERT to help Nellie out of her predicament, and a privately chartered helicopter airlifted Nellie to a safe location. Funds for the rescue were provided by private donors.

For more information, visit the VERT Web site ([www.vmeth.ucdavis.edu/home/VERT/](http://www.vmeth.ucdavis.edu/home/VERT/)) and the Center for Equine Health Web site ([www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ceh](http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ceh)).



Nellie the pack mule is airlifted from a mountain ledge in a sling codeveloped by Dr. John Madigan, VERT's founder and faculty advisor.



First-year veterinary student Karen Park monitors anesthesia as a canine patient is neutered. Each of the 28 tables in the surgical facility had a veterinarian who performed the surgery, a surgical assistant and an anesthetist.

## Spay Day 2004

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erinary students anesthesia and surgery skills. For Spay Day, the facility, with its 28-table surgical suite, served a large-scale clinical purpose.

Coordinators spent countless hours organizing the event and recruiting clinicians, technicians, students and other volunteers for each task. "We knew exactly what each student volunteer and staff member was qualified for because we've been teaching them all along," said Jan Ilkiw, associate dean for Academic Programs and the school's Spay Day coordinator.

Students served in the role of pet guardians. They met with clients and, throughout the process, handled and cared for animals assigned to them. Faculty and resident clinicians conducted health exams, pre-medication, anesthesia and surgery. Experienced students assisted with anesthesia, surgical preparation, lab testing and other selected procedures.

The surgical team began promptly at 6:30 a.m. with animals that were admitted the previous evening. Clients continued to bring in animals by appointment throughout the day; the last dogs and cats were taken home by their care-

givers, along with home care instructions, after nightfall. The cats and dogs also received diagnostic tests, vaccinations and microchip identification.

***...officials estimated that the spay-neuter procedures on 1,000 pets on Spay Day would prevent the births of 10,000 unwanted animals in just one year.***

Among the volunteers were staff members from the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory, Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, Veterinary Medicine Extension and other units; residents in dermatology, internal medicine and other specialties; office staff and data managers; and non-clinical faculty.

"Spay Day provides a major community service," says Dr. Ilkiw. "We gladly volunteer resources and expertise for this extraordinary event, to benefit animals now and help in the long-term fight against pet overpopulation."