Large Animal Clinic Launches Equine Ophthalmology Service

The VMTH is pleased to announce the launch of the Equine Ophthalmology Service. In response to the increased demand for specialist consultations for equine eye cases, the Large Animal Clinic has brought on a dedicated ophthalmology specialist to focus on horses. Previously handled by our top-notch team of multi-species ophthalmologists, horses with eye problems will now be seen by Dr. Mary Lassaline, DVM, PhD, MA, DACVO.

The new Equine Ophthalmology Service provides advanced diagnostics, as well as routine, complex and emergency medical and surgical care to horses with a variety of ocular disorders, including corneal ulcers, corneal and eyelid cancer, equine recurrent uveitis, cataracts, and glaucoma. Since starting the Service in late summer, Dr. Lassaline has hit the ground running and has already attracted a robust stream of patients.

“There certainly is no shortage of equine patients in need of advanced ophthalmology services, so there is a lot of potential to grow the service” said Dr. David Wilson, director of the VMTH. “We feel very fortunate to have recruited such a talented and experienced equine ophthalmologist as Mary to expand the services we can provide to referring veterinarians and horse owners.”

Dr. Lassaline earned her veterinary degree from Michigan State University, after which she completed a one-year medicine and surgery internship at the world-renowned Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. Dr. Lassaline then completed a residency in veterinary ophthalmology at the University of Florida. Following two years in private practice, she spent the last eight years developing and leading the equine ophthalmology program as a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests span the breadth of equine eye problems, with a particular focus on equine corneal disease.
The VMTH recently recognized National Veterinary Technician Week, and had even more reason to celebrate the accomplishments of our staff. Claudia Navarro, a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) in small animal anesthesia, recently passed the Veterinary Technician Specialist examination in anesthesia, given by the Academy of Veterinary Technician Anesthetists. Claudia may now add the initials VTS to follow the RVT after her name. The VTS designation for veterinary technicians is analogous to the Diplomate status for veterinarians who have obtained board certification in a specialty discipline.

Claudia had to complete a rigorous credentialing and examination process. She joins 14 other VMTH RVTs who are members in four of the 11 recognized Veterinary Technician Specialty Academies. The staff members and their respective academies include:


Thank you to all our veterinary technician professionals who continually go above and beyond to make sure all VMTH patients are given the highest quality care possible.

New Faculty Veterinarian Joins Livestock Medicine

Dr. Meera Heller has joined the Livestock Medicine and Surgery Service as an Assistant Professor of Clinical Livestock Medicine. Dr. Heller received her DVM degree (2001) and her PhD in Comparative Pathology (2009) from UC Davis. Following veterinary school, she completed an internship in large animal medicine and surgery (2002) at the Atlantic Veterinary College in Canada. She then returned to UC Davis to complete a residency in large animal internal medicine in 2005. Dr. Heller is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine.

“It is great to have Meera back at the VMTH,” said Dr. David Wilson, director of the VMTH. “She is already making a noticeable impact with Large Animal Clinic clients, referring veterinarians and students. I look forward to many great things to come from her addition to livestock medicine.”

Having previously served on the faculty at the University of Missouri, Dr. Heller’s clinical expertise is in internal medicine and surgery of ruminants and swine, with a special interest in goats. Her research interests are in the areas of innate immunity and juvenile immunity, especially as they pertain to prevention and treatment of calfhood disease.

“I did most of my training here at UC Davis, and it’s home – a wonderful place to learn and practice high quality medicine,” said Dr. Heller. “I will attempt to carry on that tradition, and follow in the footsteps of my mentors. Hopefully, I can inspire more students to go into livestock medicine, as well as to continue advancing the level of veterinary care that we can offer to livestock.”
A new, multidisciplinary minimally invasive approach to nasolacrimal obstructions is showing great promise at the VMTH. The lacrimal system is responsible for the generation and drainage of tears. The drainage portion of the system consists of several important structures collectively known as the nasolacrimal apparatus (NLA). This frequently becomes blocked and sometimes infected leading to discomfort, tear staining and discharge from the eye, resulting in skin inflammation. However, the NLA is made up of such small vessels that access to the obstruction can be extremely difficult.

Improvements in instrumentation and increased veterinary access to specialized equipment have improved the outcomes achieved in catheterization of other challenging locations (e.g., cannulation of the ureter, or tube draining urine from the kidney to the bladder), and a group of VMTH clinicians have begun adapting some of this equipment and these techniques for investigation and treatment of NLA obstructions.

Specialists in ophthalmology, internal medicine, endoscopy, and interventional radiology have come together and are utilizing fluoroscopy to successfully treat NLA obstruction in dogs. To date, this team has successfully cannulated the nasolacrimal duct of five canine cases and one equine case of benign NLA obstruction. The initial clinical response in the dogs has been extremely encouraging with all five cases demonstrating what the owners define as a complete resolution of signs.

Importantly, these cases are considered particularly challenging since they were referred to the VMTH by local ophthalmologists who had been unable to treat them using conventional methods. Because of this initial success, a clinical trial is now underway at the VMTH to evaluate the procedure so that this can become the standard-of-care for this otherwise frustrating disease complex.

If you are interested in referring a patient to this study, please contact the VMTH Ophthalmology Service at (530) 752-EYES (3937).

Small Animal Clinic Opens Intermediate Care Ward

The VMTH has opened the Intermediate Care Ward (ICW) to treat patients that need a high level of care, but not to the level provided in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Previously, those patients were housed in the ICU, as the general care wards were only for patients that needed less intensive monitoring and treatment. By providing a “step-down” level of intensive care, the ICW will improve quality and efficiency of patient care throughout the entire Small Animal Clinic.

The ICW is overseen by critical care specialist Dr. Kate Hopper, and is staffed primarily by small animal patient care technicians with assistance from ICU technicians when necessary.

As costs for ICW hospitalization are significantly lower than ICU costs, VMTH clients will see a benefit from the opening of the new ward. The ICW will now allow the ICU to only be utilized by the most critical cases. This differentiation of patients will streamline technician workflow, and will raise the already high level of patient care.

The VMTH recently opened the Intermediate Care Ward in the Small Animal Clinic.
VMTH Offers First-Ever Small Animal Clinical Infectious Disease Fellowship

Under the tutelage of infectious disease specialist and Small Animal Clinic Director Dr. Jane Sykes, Dr. Polina Vishkautsan has joined the VMTH as the world’s first fellow in small animal clinical infectious diseases. The one-year fellowship will provide Dr. Vishkautsan with unique training opportunities in both the clinical and microbiology laboratory environments at the VMTH, and will prepare her to pursue future career opportunities in academic practice, private practice or industry.

Board certified in internal medicine, Dr. Vishkautsan will have clinical responsibilities in the hospital, including consulting with clinicians from various Services on infectious disease cases, a teaching component with DVM students in rounds and while seeing cases, referring veterinarian interaction, and a specific research study with Dr. Sykes evaluating the use of an antifungal medication in cats.

“I feel very privileged to be able to go through this training program,” Dr. Vishkautsan. “I am learning from the best people in veterinary medicine at a point in my career that otherwise I would not be able to do it again, unless I signed up for another residency.”

Dr. Vishkautsan is originally from Israel, and graduated from Hebrew University’s Koret Veterinary School in 2001. She completed an internship in small animal emergency and critical care at the Animal Emergency Center in Glendale, Wisconsin in 2004, and a residency in small animal internal medicine at Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston in 2006.

Dr. Lance Visser Joins Cardiology Service

The VMTH’s Cardiology Service is pleased to announce the addition of Dr. Lance Visser to its clinical team. Dr. Visser joins as an Assistant Professor of Clinical Cardiology, and has been with the hospital since September.

Dr. Visser received his DVM and a Master’s degree in Comparative Medicine and Integrated Biology from Michigan State University in 2010. He then completed an internship in small animal medicine and surgery at North Carolina State University in 2011, and a residency in cardiology and another Master’s degree in Comparative and Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University in 2014. Dr. Visser became board certified in cardiology by the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine in June 2014.

“We are pleased to have Lance join our already outstanding team of cardiologists at the VMTH,” said Dr. David Wilson, director of the VMTH. “His clinical and research background in academic settings make him a great fit for the VMTH and the School of Veterinary Medicine.”

Dr. Visser’s research interests are in the areas of noninvasive assessment of cardiac structure and function. Recently, he has characterized several unexplored echocardiographic indices of right ventricular function in the dog. Dr. Visser’s clinical interests are broad and include advanced electrocardiography, acute and chronic management of heart failure, noninvasive/advanced imaging (echo, CT, MRI), interventional cardiovascular medicine, congenital heart disease, and cardiovascular pathology.

“We are pleased to have Lance join our already outstanding team of cardiologists at the VMTH.”

– Dr. David Wilson
Did You Know?

… that former Dentistry and Oral Surgery Service residents, Drs. Santiago Peralta and Nadine Fiani, were recently appointed as faculty in dentistry and oral surgery at Cornell University?

… that orthopedic surgeon Dr. Sun Young Kim successfully completed the BioMedtrix Universal Hip Product Certification Program?

… that our Equine Reproduction and Livestock Herd Health & Reproduction Services won multiple awards at the recent Society for Theriogenology Conference in Portland? Dr. Camilla Scott won first place in the resident abstract competition for her study evaluating antibiotic concentrations in mares with endometritis. Students Sarah Woods and Emily Putts won first and fourth place awards for their case presentations. Our student chapter of the Society for Theriogenology won “Chapter of the Year” honors, and retired faculty member Dr. Bob Bondurant was awarded the Bartlett Lifetime Achievement Award.

… that Dr. Tatiana Ferreira has joined the hospital as a clinical instructor in anesthesiology? She is a former UC Davis resident, and her clinical interests include anesthesia and pain management of small, large, and exotic animals.

Thanks and Praise from Grateful Clients

“Dr. Sean Hulsebosch and student Erin Smythe demonstrated confidence-inspiring competence and the kind of compassion that usually marks shining human beings. They are both a credit to the merits of the UC system as a teaching institution in general and as emissaries to their profession”

– Ted & Paulina H., Columbia, California

“I would like to send a special thank you to Drs. Ann Della Maggiore and Lynelle Johnson. They both consistently went out of their way to help me make the most of my time as a Don Low Fellow.”

– Dr. Tracy M., Green Valley, California

“The fact that Dr. Jessie Sutton went out of her way to say hi and give Taz some love says so much about your institution. Thank you to the caring doctors and staff for taking such wonderful care of Taz.”

– Dave & Krystal S., Madera, California

“Duffy had his first appointment with Dr. Jamie Peyton yesterday. If dogs can smile and laugh, Duffy did both as Dr. Peyton walked him back to us.”

– Carolyn W., Davis, California

“When you have ‘titled’ dogs, they need the best in personal care…that’s UC Davis and Dr. Julie Meadows. Thank you for making Sir Bowan feel better and easing my fears.”

– Martha C., San Ramon, California

DVM students Sarah Woods and Emily Putts accept the student “Chapter of the Year” award at the Society for Theriogenology Conference.
Philanthropic Support Helps Save Pregnant Ewe Following Attack

In the spring of 2014, a small flock of nine sheep in Northern California were attacked by an escaped dog. Six of the sheep were killed, two were euthanized at the scene, and one ewe of unknown age managed to survive. Animal control authorities could not locate the owner so they brought the surviving ewe to the VMTH, where she was stabilized until the owner could be found.

Unfortunately, the owner chose not to continue care and relinquished her to animal control. The Livestock Medicine and Surgery Service was eager to find a way to continue care for the ewe, as they were hopeful she would survive her injuries. The UC Davis veterinarians also wanted their students to benefit from the experience of working with this sheep. While veterinary students gain exceptional experience with large animals, most of the animals seen at the hospital are cats and dogs. On occasion, students with minimal experience in large animal medicine (and aspirations of small animal careers) will change their minds and pursue large animal career paths after gaining experiences with a case like this.

In hopes of finding a solution and continuing the ewe’s care, veterinarians called on a long-time client and friend of the hospital to enlist her support. Thankfully, she was willing to provide financial assistance and a permanent home for the ewe after she recovered.

The ewe had suffered multiple lacerations to her face, neck and abdomen. The lacerations on her neck and body healed well with sutures and regular bandage changes. However, the damage to her face was extensive and needed additional and prolonged medical attention. Veterinarians were concerned about infection and severe damage to her oral and nasal cavities. She was placed on anti-inflammatory drugs and antibiotics to minimize the swelling and combat infection.

Three weeks into the hospitalization, Buffy, as the ewe was now known, underwent an ultrasound exam that revealed she was pregnant and that her unborn lamb had survived the dog attack. With her wounds healing nicely after a month at the VMTH, Buffy went to her new home, a 10-acre ranch near Davis with dozens of other animals. Two months later, Buffy returned to the hospital to give birth to a healthy lamb named Miss Serena Flock.

Buffy’s ordeal—as well as an understanding of the importance of livestock veterinarians in regards to food safety and agroterrorism—made her new owner see the need for veterinary students, regardless of their primary species of interest, to treat more livestock patients at the VMTH. As this approach is also a high priority for UC Davis, she worked with the School of Veterinary Medicine’s development office to establish a compassionate care fund to assist the Livestock Medicine and Surgery Service with future cases like Buffy’s. By doing so, veterinary students are provided more opportunities to care for livestock and prevent some of them from being euthanized when the projected costs of veterinary care exceeds their market value.

To find out how you can contribute to the fund, or benefit the School in another way, please visit www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/development or call (530) 752-7024.
UC Davis Saves Dog with Emergency Surgery

Angel, a 3-year-old female Akita, had been getting progressively inappetant for about a week. She was also experiencing vomiting and diarrhea when her owner brought her to her primary care veterinarian. The vet prescribed medications, including an antidiarrheal and an antibiotic, as well as an adjusted diet. Angel initially improved with the medication, but she continued to not eat. She was lethargic and still not her normal self, so she was brought to the Community Medicine Service at the VMTH.

Once at UC Davis, veterinarians in Community Medicine performed a physical examination on Angel, using the opportunity as a teaching moment for veterinary students training with the Service. As the VMTH is a teaching hospital, every appointment is utilized as part of the final year training for DVM students. Student clinical rounds in Community Medicine are especially important as so many of the veterinary students go on to be primary care practitioners.

Community Medicine consulted with the VMTH’s Diagnostic Imaging Service, where radiographs (x-rays) and an abdominal ultrasound revealed Angel’s uterus was dilated and filled with fluid, an infectious condition known as a closed pyometra. Closed pyometras can be deadly if not treated properly since they can cause dogs to become septic and develop shock. A diagnosis of pyometra is a surgical emergency. The proper course of action is an immediate ovariohysterectomy (spay) to completely remove both ovaries and the uterus.

In Angel’s case, she was most likely in septic shock and was anemic due to the chronic inflammation and the likely bacterial sepsis resulting from the pyometra. The Community Medicine Service performs routine spays but, due to Angel’s systemic instability and ill health, as well as the potential need for intense postoperative monitoring and advanced supportive care, the surgery was performed by specialists in the VMTH’s Soft Tissue Surgery Service. Despite Angel’s serious illness, she made it through the surgery successfully.

Angel recovered in the hospital’s Intensive Care Unit and was monitored overnight. Throughout the night, she remained stable and was given intravenous antibiotics, pain medication and fluid therapy. She was also given medications for her vomiting and potential nausea. Angel remained hospitalized for one more day, but was then allowed to go home where she recovered with the help of pain medication, cold compresses of the incision site and activity restriction until her sutures were removed two weeks later.

Angel’s case is a great example of the collaborative approach to patient care at UC Davis. Angel’s emergent condition was diagnosed and treated immediately because of the full range of services available under one roof. In critical conditions such as Angel’s, having all the necessary equipment and specialists available immediately, working as a team, was important for a successful outcome.

Her case also is a reminder of the importance of spaying and neutering pets. The procedures are not just a way of controlling the pet population – they can also hold many health benefits. Had Angel been spayed earlier, her pyometra never would have occurred. Thankfully, Angel is healthy once again and back to her normal self.

Thanks to the necessary specialists and equipment immediately available at the VMTH, Angel’s life was saved.
Welcome to the September/October issue of VMTH Heartbeat. With the beginning of a new academic year, many new faces have joined the VMTH. We are delighted to introduce some of those veterinary professionals to you here. From new clinicians and staff members to new house officers and students, the VMTH is an ever-changing environment. All the new additions to the hospital bring with them unique skill sets that make the VMTH the premiere veterinary clinical teaching and patient care center in the world.

A few of our more prominent cases highlighted in the “Case of the Month” sections will give you an example of the care and compassion practiced at the VMTH every day. Whether it’s an injured ewe that needs care and a new home, or a dog that needs emergency surgery, the VMTH team always comes together to provide the best possible outcome for our patients.

We are continually discovering new knowledge and developing new cutting-edge procedures to keep the VMTH positioned at the forefront of veterinary medicine. These initiatives, as well as our collaboration with our referring veterinarian community, enable us to continue our tradition of providing the highest quality care.

Regards,

Dr. W. David Wilson, BVMS, MS, Hon DACVIM, Director, William R. Pritchard VMTH

Featured Clinical Trial

Drs. Chris Murphy and Danika Bannasch are recruiting for a new clinical trial to identify the region of the dog genome associated with myopia in the Labrador retriever. Any purebred Labrador retrievers are encouraged to enroll. For more information on this trial, contact Kristina Boswell (kboswell@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-3981) or Monica Motta (mjmotta@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-3510), or visit www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/clinicaltrials.

CE Calendar

Veterinary Continuing Education
(530) 752-3905, Fax: (530) 752-6728
center4cpe@ucdavis.edu

Upcoming Veterinary Continuing Education Events:
- November 2  Year in Review, San Francisco SPCA
- November 7-9  2nd Annual Donkey Welfare Symposium, UC Davis
- November 14-15  9th Annual Veterinary Neurology Symposium, Monterey
- December 3-7  Explorer Series, Costa Rica

For more information on these and other upcoming CE events, please visit www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ce.