Dr. Catalina Cabrera was recently presented with the President’s Volunteer Service Award, a prestigious national honor for her volunteer work. As one of only 73 volunteers nationwide to receive the award, Dr. Cabrera was recognized for her more than 70 hours of service on international assignments in Nepal, demonstrating how local citizens can make a worldwide impact.

During her time in Nepal, Dr. Cabrera trained young faculty, scientists and officers from various agencies and institutions in regards to infertility management in cattle to improve food safety and sustainable food animal production. She visited Nepal in August 2014. Sadly, those efforts are now on hold while all of Nepal struggles in the difficult aftermath of a massive earthquake, and USAID and volunteers work on assisting its communities.

Established in 2003, the President’s Volunteer Service Award is available on an annual basis to individuals, groups and families who have met or exceeded requirements for volunteer service and have demonstrated exemplary citizenship through volunteering.

The award is issued by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation, a group created by President George W. Bush to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers are making to the nation. The Council comprises leaders in government, media, entertainment, business, education, nonprofits and volunteer service organizations, and community volunteering.
The hospital is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Pam Hullinger, DVM, MPVM, DACVPM, as director of the Large Animal Clinic. Dr. Hullinger joins UC Davis from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), where she served as chief veterinary officer of the Agricultural Security Program. She will also maintain her previously held position at UC Davis in the School of Veterinary Medicine’s Department of Medicine and Epidemiology as a specialist/clinical diagnostic epidemiologist and lecturer.

“I am honored to be returning to UC Davis to work with such an esteemed team of veterinarians and technician patient care specialists,” said Dr. Hullinger. “I look forward to working with the faculty and staff to implement a strategic planning effort that will improve on the Large Animal Clinic’s already excellent level of clinical equine and livestock programs.”

Dr. Hullinger is a 1990 graduate of the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. She completed a residency in large animal internal medicine (equine emphasis) in 1996 and a Master’s in Preventive Veterinary Medicine in 2001. She served for ten years as a veterinary medical officer with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, before joining LLNL.

In addition to her clinical and epidemiological experience, Dr. Hullinger has foreign animal disease experience including working in the United Kingdom as part of the effort to control the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001. She also assisted with the eradication of Exotic Newcastle Disease from Southern California in 2002-2003.

“Pam’s impressive professional background has allowed her to develop strong working relationships with diverse segments of the equine and livestock industries, as well as practicing veterinarians, and governmental and educational organizations locally, nationally, and internationally,” said Dr. David Wilson, director of the VMTH. “These relationships will substantially benefit our large animal clinical programs.”

In addition to her passion for clinical medicine and the training of veterinary students and house officers, Dr. Hullinger’s interests include: food safety and security; epidemiology; international veterinary medicine and global ecosystem health; foreign animal, emerging, zoonotic, and infectious diseases; biotechnology and bio-detection technologies; infectious disease pathogen modeling and informatics.

“Pam has proven excellent leadership, management, and communication skills, and we are extremely fortunate that she is rejoining the VMTH team,” added Dr. Wilson.

“Pam’s impressive professional background has allowed her to develop strong working relationships with diverse segments of the equine and livestock industries, as well as practicing veterinarians, and governmental and educational organizations locally, nationally, and internationally.”

– Dr. David Wilson
Director, VMTH
As the hospital looks to the planned growth coming in the near future, several new clinicians have joined the Small Animal Clinic. As the hospital’s caseload continues to grow, so must the team members in order to optimally serve the client and referring veterinarian base, as well as our students and house officers.

Dr. Catherine (Cass) Rogers, DVM, DACVECC, has joined the Integrative Medicine Service, as this rapidly evolving service continues to increase its caseload. Dr. Rogers joins Service Chief Dr. Jamie Peyton’s team as a staff veterinarian, and is having an immediate impact on serving the already robust and expanding caseload. Dr. Rogers received her veterinary degree from Tufts University, and interned at Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston, one of the busiest veterinary hospitals in the country. She also completed a residency in small animal emergency and critical care at Tufts, after which she became board certified in emergency and critical care. She returned to Angell as a senior staff member in their Emergency and Critical Care Service, then became a lecturer at Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine (2009-2012). Since 2012, Dr. Rogers has worked as a critical care specialist in the Bay Area, and will soon complete her certification in rehabilitation and acupuncture.

Joining the Aquatic Animal Medicine section of the Companion Exotic Animal Medicine & Surgery Service as an associate professor is Dr. Esteban Soto, DVM, MSc, PhD, DACVM, CertAqV. Dr. Soto received his veterinary degree from the National University of Costa Rica. He then completed a Master’s degree in Veterinary Science/Aquatic Pathobiology at Mississippi State University and a PhD in Pathobiological Sciences from Louisiana State University. He previously served on the faculty at Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Soto became a certified fish pathologist by the American Fisheries Society-Fish Health Section in 2010, board certified by the American College of Veterinary Microbiologists with subspecialties in Veterinary Bacteriology and Mycology and Veterinary Immunology in 2013, and certified as an Aquatic Veterinarian by the World Aquatic Veterinary Medical Association in 2015. His addition will help the hospital increase its offerings to private owners of aquatic animals, aquarium exhibits, the aquaculture industry and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Also joining the faculty are Small Animal Internal Medicine Service clinicians Drs. Jonathan Dear and Ann Della-Maggiore, who have previously served as staff veterinarians, but now will take on the role of assistant clinical professors. Soon, the SAC will welcome new clinicians to the Soft Tissue Surgery and Orthopedic Surgery Services. These additions precede the school’s plans for a new Veterinary Medical Center which will substantially enhance clinical offerings for clients and their animals.
Nutrition Service Establishes Weight Loss Clinic

To help with the growing number of overweight pets, the Nutrition Service has established the Healthy Nutrition & Wellness Clinic to provide the tools necessary for veterinarians and owners to work together to help ensure optimum health and longevity for pets. Just as staying trim and healthy is vital for humans, it’s equally important for pets. The maintenance of a lean body condition is the only intervention that has been proven to improve quality of life and promote longevity in companion animals.

As with people, obesity in pets is increasing and is one of the most common health problems seen in dogs and cats. Studies have shown that more than half of the dogs and cats in some populations are overweight. In both dogs and cats, obesity may contribute to the development or worsening of diabetes, heart and lung disease, exercise or heat intolerance, can increase surgical and anesthetic risk, and can cause or worsen bone and joint disease.

The Healthy Nutrition & Wellness Clinic veterinarians will work with clients to develop a nutritional management plan specific to their pet’s needs. This customized and successful weight loss program will take into account any health problems that may be present. For more information or to make an appointment, please call (530) 752-7892.

Livestock Clinicians Inspect Ram Sale

Clinicians and staff members from the hospital’s Livestock Herd Health and Reproduction and Large Animal Medicine Services, along with members of the Dairy Production Medicine Service (which is housed at the school’s Veterinary Medical Teaching & Research Center in Tulare), recently served as inspectors at the 95th Annual California Wool Growers Association’s Ram Sale. The School of Veterinary Medicine has a long-standing tradition of participating in the Ram Sale, having done so since before the first graduating class of 1952.

Inspections conducted by UC Davis veterinarians ensure that rams will not have signs of infectious diseases, genetic abnormalities and that their scrotal contents palpate normal and have the adequate size to fulfill their job in the flock. More than 550 rams were inspected by a team comprised of Drs. Sharif Aly, Catalina Cabrera, Bret McNabb, Joan Dean Rowe, and Fauna Smith; staff member Barbara Thorne; and VMTRC externship students from Purdue University, University of Pennsylvania and University of Glasgow.

For 65 years, veterinarians from UC Davis have been part of this event, conducting the health examinations of the animals for sale. Emeritus professor Dr. Blaine McGowan—a member of the school’s first graduating class of 1952—started this commitment from the school to the wool and lamb industry in 1950 when he was a veterinary student. Dr. McGowan joined the faculty at UC Davis upon graduation, and focused his efforts on the California Sheep Industry, winning the CWGA’s Golden Fleece Award in 1983 for his outstanding service. Over the years, several faculty, residents and students have participated in the Ram Sale, and have showcased the importance of the role veterinarians play in the livestock industry with the producers and, ultimately, the consumers.
Did You Know?

… that Dr. Frank Verstraete, chief of the Dentistry and Oral Surgery Service, recently won the American Veterinary Dental Society’s Hills Research and Education Award?

… that the SVM communications team recently won the 2015 AAVMC Communications Excellence Award? This VMTH Heartbeat newsletter was part of the winning materials submitted for consideration.

… that the VMTH and the Center for Equine Health recently promoted our equine services at the annual Western States Horse Expo? Thank you to Drs. Monica Aleman, Bruce Christensen, Julie Dechant and Claudia Sonder, as well as staff members Ruben Arevalo, Megan Badgley, Laura Doran, Katie Hatch, Danielle Carrade Holt, Kim Ney, Rob Warren, and Michael Weigman for their time at the event.

… that the hospital’s blood bank attends many community events in order to attract new canine blood donors to the program? The VMTH runs the largest veterinary blood bank in the western United States. Thank you to Sasha Beoshanz, Dyne Hansing and Danielle Carrade Holt for their recruitment efforts.

Thanks and Praise from Grateful Clients

“We had a wonderful visit with the Ophthalmology Service. The doctors were terrific and loved our service dog Gulliver. What a fantastic group of people. Thank you for your help.”

– Herb & Faye V., Meadow Vista, California

“I want to recognize two of your staff – Dr. Matt O’Donnell and senior student Sam Varon. They were awesome and exceeded everything that I had hoped for; for my dog. I was just so pleased with their compassion, follow up phone calls to us, and how well Mia was taken care of. It really meant a lot to us because our pets are our family.”

– Ashleigh J., Oakdale, California

“Dr. Jenna Burton is wonderful, and takes amazing care of my cat, Sox. She is incredibly compassionate and responsive, as she truly ‘owns’ Sox’s case. I couldn’t ask for more. Most importantly to me, I trust Dr. Burton implicitly.”

– Colleen G., Mountain View, California

“Thank you to Drs. Julie Dechant and Gary Magdesian for everything you’ve done for Ruby. She made a great recovery and is back to winning.”

– Jessica H., Tulelake, California

“Thanks so much for the great care and assistance we received for our pig Rosie. Everyone in the Large Animal Clinic was great.”

– Chuck & JoAnne S., Clayton, California

“Dr. Stern performed surgery on our daughter’s cat, Guava, last month, and was great, like everyone at Davis. We feel so fortunate to have a world-class vet hospital so close, staffed by very caring and talented people.”

– Peter C., Santa Cruz, California
UC Davis Ophthalmologists Create New Eyelid from Cat’s Cheek and Lips

Billie, a 9-month-old female domestic shorthair cat, was brought to the Ophthalmology Service for further evaluation of a congenital defect that caused her to be born without part of her upper eyelids. The condition, known as eyelid agenesis, caused Billie to be unable to close either of her eyes completely, and also caused hair in that area to rub on her cornea, constantly irritating and inflaming her eyes.

Several different options are available to treat eyelid agenesis, but none are ideal. To prevent the hairs from growing into the eye, the follicles can be frozen by cryoepilation, but that doesn’t solve the missing eyelid conundrum. To protect the eye from dryness, lubricants can be used, but that would require a multiple-time-per-day, life-long commitment from the owners. Both of these treatments still leave the eye prone to infection or injury which could ultimately result in blindness. Most surgical procedures described for eyelid agenesis do not result in the ability to blink the eyelid. There was another alternative UC Davis ophthalmologists were considering, though.

An examination revealed that Billie did not have any scratches on the cornea or inflammation inside the eye, but the eyelid agenesis was extensive and had resulted in chronic irritation to the surface of both eyes. Also, her vision was impaired due to other birth defects that subtly affected the back of her eyes. Billie had proper light perception, though, and responded to gestures towards the eye, indicating that her remaining vision was worth saving. Based on the examination, the ophthalmologists thought she would be a good candidate for a corrective surgery that had been performed elsewhere over the past five years, but never at UC Davis.

In 2010, a veterinary ophthalmologist at The Ohio State University, along with others, published a paper describing a groundbreaking surgery to correct eyelid agenesis. The procedure involved removing tissue from the cat’s cheek and lips and transplanting it as an eyelid. Not designed to be a cosmetic procedure, the surgery’s main goals are to provide protection for the eye, make the eye more comfortable, and reduce or eliminate the need for life-long medication to lubricate the eye. The transplant surgery also removes a great source of irritation — hair rubbing directly against the cornea. Tissue taken from around the mouth is the ideal match because hair in that area grows away from the mouth, hence it would grow away from the eyes in the new area.

Members of the Ophthalmology Service were able to acquire cat cadavers to acquaint themselves with the surgery, and began practicing the transplant technique. Input from the hospital’s Dentistry and Oral Surgery Service and the Soft Tissue Surgery Service aided in the preparation. After several successful trials, the team discussed the procedure with Billie’s owner, who agreed to the surgery. Known as a lip commissure to eyelid transposition, the surgery on Billie was a success.

At her one-week recheck appointment, both grafts appeared to be well positioned with no signs of necrosis, wound dehiscence, or infection present. After two weeks, Billie’s sutures were removed. Much of the swelling had dissipated, and her new eyelids seemed to be taking shape nicely. At her two-month recheck appointment, she was able to blink both eyes, and the sutured areas looked dramatically better. All of her hair around the affected areas, which was clipped prior to the surgery, grew back—away from her eyes—giving Billie a healthy look.

Since Billie’s surgery, UC Davis has performed two other lip commissure to eyelid transpositions, both of which were also successful.
Foal with Botulism Recovers after Month-Long Hospitalization

Bossey's Cookies, a newborn pony/Paint cross filly, was brought to UC Davis at 10 days of age for a progressive neurological disorder. Following three days of normal activity since birth, she was down for prolonged periods in her stall, staggering around, and unable to rise on her own. Her owners initially suspected a neck injury, as she was not able to raise her head or neck, and seemed to have abnormal range of motion through her cervical spine.

If assisted, she could stand and was able to nurse if her head was supported in the proper position, but could not lift her head to reach the udder on her own, as it dropped instantly if support was removed. Initially when she went down, her attitude seemed positive and responsive, but Bossey's Cookies became quieter and weaker as days progressed. She was not standing as long or walking as well, and spent most of her time in lateral recumbency.

Bossey's Cookies was examined by her veterinarian near her home in the Inland Empire region of Southern California. Radiographs showed no damage to her spine or fractures of any kind. Euthanasia was considered, but her owners weren't quite ready to give up. They heard about the equine experts at UC Davis, so they loaded up Bossey's Cookies and her mare and drove the nearly 400 miles to Davis for one last effort to save her life. In route, they stopped every two hours to let the filly nurse from her dam.

Once at UC Davis, Bossey's Cookies was examined by the Large Animal Clinic's Equine Surgical Emergency and Critical Care Service, as well as the Equine Medicine Service. Dr. Gary Magdesian, an expert in neonatology and critical care, thought that she had signs of a neuromuscular disease, most likely botulism. He conferred with Bossey's Cookies veterinarian back home and decided it was worth the effort to test for botulism, which is potentially treatable. Because time is of the essence with botulism, treatment for it began immediately.

Botulism can be a fatal illness caused by a toxin produced by bacteria. In horses, botulism can occur three different ways: 1) toxico-infectious botulism, where young foals eat spores from the environment which proliferate inside their gut, allowing the organism to produce toxins; 2) by eating toxin that's already been made in spoiled feed or water, generally caused by anaerobic conditions in the feed or the presence of dead animals in the feed; 3) wound botulism, where a bacterial organism proliferates in a necrotic wound.

Electrophysiology testing conducted by VMTH research associate Dr. Colette Williams and clinician Dr. Monica Aleman was compatible with botulism, and PCR testing confirmed that Bossey's Cookies was positive for Type A botulism, which relaxes the entire muscular system by inhibiting nerve transmission to the muscles. Type A botulism tends to be the most severe form. When treated properly, Type A botulism patients can make a full recovery, but that can take several weeks. Dr. Magdesian, along with resident Dr. Jamie Prutton, fourth-year student Anastasha Plummer and the VMTH patient care team, began treating Bossey's Cookies with botulism antitoxin and IV penicillin.

When Bossey's Cookies first arrived at UC Davis, she was too weak to eat. Tube fed at first, she was able to eat on her own shortly after beginning the botulism antitoxin treatments. She started to make other improvements also – gradually at first, but then more significant strides to indicate a recovery. Within a week, she made efforts to stand on her own. By two weeks, those efforts became stronger, as she was nearly able to stand. At three weeks, she was able to stand with minor assistance and was eager to be up and walking around her stall. By four weeks, Bossey's Cookies stood on her own and was bright and active. Now at home, she continues to get stronger daily.

When newborn animals are hospitalized, they need around-the-clock care, especially recumbent foals. With its 24/7 emergency care staff, the VMTH was the ideal place for Bossey's Cookies to receive care. Because of its large complement of equine specialists, well-trained patient care staff, and talented and enthusiastic veterinary students, UC Davis provided a compassionate environment in which to recover with the proper amount of care needed. Dr. Magdesian expects Bossey's Cookies to make a full recovery.

Equine specialists at UC Davis helped Bossey’s Cookies recover from botulism.
From The Director’s Corner

As we end another academic year, we congratulate the 136 members of the Class of 2015 and wish them success in their chosen career path. Being the first class in the new curriculum, they blazed new trails and overcame unique challenges and tragedies that strengthened their bonds with each other and the School. They accomplished many “firsts,” including a longer senior clinical year with more opportunities for elective rotations and externships. We thank them for their tireless efforts in providing exceptional patient care in the teaching hospital.

Along with welcoming the Class of 2016 into the hospital, we are excited to welcome several new clinicians and key leaders. Taking over the reins of the Large Animal Clinic is Dr. Pam Hullinger, who will lead our equine and livestock clinical programs and advance them into the next era of the hospital, as we look to a future that includes planning for a new Veterinary Medical Center. Pam will play a vital role in working with faculty and stakeholders to develop and implement coordinated strategic and facilities plans that will shape our programs in the future.

Welcome to all our new faculty, staff and students to the VMTH team. I have no doubt that your efforts and accomplishments will help maintain our position as the premier veterinary training center in the world.

Regards,

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

Featured Clinical Trial

Dr. Sara Thomasy is recruiting for a new clinical trial to characterize Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome (SARDS) with the hope of identifying protein biomarkers and/or the genetic components of the disease. Owners are encouraged to enroll their dogs if they have been diagnosed with SARDS or that have healthy retinas. For more information about this and other groundbreaking trials, visit www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/clinicaltrials or email vetclintrials@ucdavis.edu.