Welcome to the inaugural issue of VMTH View, the new VMTH monthly newsletter. Each month, we’ll bring the latest updates on events happening throughout the hospital. We’ll highlight success stories, update you on new services and people, bring you interesting facts about who all of us are and, finally, let you see what others are saying about our work.

This is always an exciting time of year at the VMTH. The 4th year students and our new residents reinvigorate us with their energy and fresh faces in the hallways. A few recent appointments have also added to that excitement level. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Jane Sykes has been named the new Director of Small Animal Clinical Services, and the VMTH has finally brought on a designated Communications Officer, Rob Warren. Rob’s expertise will bring prominent exposure to the superior veterinary care we provide and help continue to position us at the forefront of veterinary medicine.

Perhaps you’ve noticed some aesthetic changes in the Large Animal Clinic. I’d like to thank Dr. Greg Ferraro and Shawn Rasmussen, along with Kim Ney and her LAC team for arranging the makeover. I would also like to thank my wife, Joni, for volunteering her time and design expertise to the project. Elsewhere around the hospital, other changes continue to transpire. The remodel of the former pathology space to accommodate the new Pharmacy and Central Service is rapidly nearing completion. This and the restroom remodel in the LAC are the final phases of the Vet Med 3A project. Finally, the installation of Estimate Generator software has come to fruition, and it is better than I ever imagined. I want to thank the many faculty, staff and residents who provided input along the way.

I’d like to leave you with a few personal thoughts on what we do here. The veterinarian’s oath states, in part, that we use our skills to protect animal health and ease pain and suffering. We accomplish this by continually going above and beyond, by regarding our profession as something more than a means of livelihood. We are here not just for the paycheck, but because we strive to make a difference. Our job is not measured by how many widgets we produce or sell, but by the care we offer. Did we do everything within our abilities to help our patients? Did we communicate with our clients and referring veterinarians at a level beyond their expectations? If we can answer those questions with a “yes,” then we’ve had a successful day. Be it faculty, staff, house officer or student, we are all here because we carry something inside us that makes us reach for that “yes” every day.

Enjoy this first issue of VMTH View and please let us know what you think.

All the best, W. David Wilson, BVMS, MS  - Director, VMTH

Dr. Sykes Appointed New Director of SAC

Dr. Jane Sykes has been appointed the new Director of Small Animal Clinical Services. Succeeding Dr. Dick Nelson, she will lead the educational, patient care and client/referring veterinarian service programs in the SAC and fulfill an important role as a key member of the VMTH Leadership Team. Dr. Sykes’ interaction with faculty, staff, house officers and students will be essential in maintaining the pre-eminent position of our clinical programs.

A faculty member since 2002, Dr. Sykes has served as Chief of the Small Animal Medicine Service and as Biosecurity Officer for the SAC. Outside of the VMTH, she is President of the Specialty of Small Animal Internal Medicine within the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine. Dr. Sykes has also served as President of the International Society for Companion Animal Infectious Diseases, an organization she founded in 2006.

Dr. Sykes looks forward to participating in the design of a world-class hospital that optimizes patient care and provides a pleasant work environment, in which faculty, staff, house officers and students can look forward to coming to work each day. She will also strive to improve the internal communication within the SAC and increase community awareness of our world-class clinical services.

Dr. Sykes hails from Melbourne, Australia. She completed her residency at the University of Minnesota, where she was also a clinical faculty member before coming to the VMTH.

Congratulations and Welcome Aboard, Dr. Sykes!
Canine Bone Regrowth Trial Successful

Dogs who have had bone tissue removed from the mandible now have hope for a permanent fix. Veterinary oral surgeons, Drs. Frank Verstraete and Boaz Arzi, recently teamed with biomedical engineers, Drs. Kyriacos Athanasiou and Dan Huey, to develop a technique to grow jaw bone.

The four UC Davis colleagues have successfully used commercially available scaffold and an innovative surgical procedure in eight dogs to date. The dogs either suffered an injury causing a bone gap or have had part of their jaws amputated to remove a tumor. All eight dogs now have fully and properly formed mandibular bone and normal jaw and mouth function. This treatment is not approved for human use, but these spectacular results in dogs could shorten the time to human clinical trials, so that this procedure developed by our faculty can ultimately benefit people, as well as their pets.

In the surgery, Drs. Verstraete and Arzi use a specialized titanium plate, molding it to the native jaw bone’s shape. Pilot holes are drilled into the jaw so that later the original shape will be maintained. The plate is then removed, and the diseased portion of the jaw is amputated. Dr. Huey prepares the scaffold by saturating it with bone morphogenetic proteins while Drs. Verstraete and Arzi work. Following the amputation, the plate is re-applied to the remaining bone, followed by implantation of the scaffold. Although a major part of the jaw is amputated, the surgery preserves the shape and integrity of the jaw.

Within two weeks of the surgery, X-rays reveal bone formation. At four weeks, solid bone fills the gap. By three months, the dogs are completely healed.

The dogs’ owners gave consent for these groundbreaking experimental surgeries, and are delighted with the results.

VMTH Hosts Successful 4-day Ultrasound CE Seminar

VMTH’s Large Animal Ultrasound Service recently hosted the American Association of Equine Practitioners’ “360 Imaging: Musculoskeletal Ultrasound,” a 4-day continuing education (CE) course. The event—spearheaded by Dr. Mary Beth Whitcomb—provided an in-depth experience maximizing the benefits of ultrasound to diagnose, manage and rehabilitate horses with soft tissue injuries. Topics covered included the use of ultrasound to diagnose metacarpal and metatarsal injuries, some of the most common cases seen by equine veterinarians. The course then expanded that knowledge to more challenging regions of the horse, allowing participants to receive extensive one-on-one ultrasound instruction in small group settings.

In addition to Dr. Whitcomb, presenting instructors from the VMTH included Dr. Betsy Vaughan, Dr. Alex Young and Dr. Rachel Kaplan.

The event was a huge success, selling out at 24 participants. “Most ultrasound CE events are 1-2 days, or even just an afternoon,” stated Dr. Whitcomb. “So, for us to successfully host a 4-day course says a lot about the amazing team we have here at the VMTH.”

Additional thanks go to: Dr. Greg Ferraro, Dr. David Wilson, Dr. Georgette Shields, Dr. Jan Ilkiw, Dan Allenbaugh, Laurie Christison, Bob Criner, Dustin Dennis, Jan Harlan, Erica Maulhardt, Jillian Mills, Betina Morales, Jessica Morgan-Wade, Mariya Pitel, Hayley Robinson, Seana Wheatley, Kelly Zersen, Carey Ross and Debbie Miles from AAEPI, the entire barn crew, the Center for Equine Health team for arranging horses for the lab, and, finally, the staff of the Gourley Clinical Teaching Center.

Whiskey with Dr. Boaz Arzi, Dr. Frank Verstaete, owner Tom Swierk and Dr. Dan Huey

Ultrasound instruction in small group sessions was featured at the seminar.
New Software Refines Client Estimates

Estimate Generator software has rolled out. The tool will take client estimates off the notepad and onto the computer. Estimate Generator will provide greater documentation of the services offered to clients, enhancing our communication with them. The new process is completely electronic. It gives a more detailed report, individually estimates each portion of an overall treatment plan and greatly lowers the odds of error and misunderstanding.

A team led by Steve Zeck worked tirelessly to develop and refine Estimate Generator. Their input, expertise and programming skills have allowed the VMTH to create an essential tool that will better serve our clients, clinicians and students. The efforts, creativity and persistence of Zeck, Dr. Jonathan Dear, Frank LaBonte, Mari-Ann Green, Theresa Varland, Penny Farnham, Kim Ney and a host of others warrant a well-deserved kudos.

"The commitment of this team to the VMTH and its clients is admirable and deeply appreciated," stated Farnham, Small Animal Client Services Manager. "It is through their efforts and leadership that we are able to achieve our goal of excellence – just another example of the amazing people we have here."

"We have been waiting a long time for Estimate Generator to become a reality," stated LaBonte, Hospital Administrator. "It will certainly make a positive difference for both our clients and clinicians."

Did You Know?

…that 11 of this year’s new house officers are from overseas? They come from Nigeria, Australia, Slovenia, Japan, Greece, New Zealand, United Kingdom, France (2), Ecuador and Canada.

…that seemingly harmless items can be toxic to pets? Dogs should never consume grapes/raisins, chocolate, macadamia nuts, onions or garlic. Azaleas, rhododendrons, lilies, tulips and daffodils can be harmful to cats.

…that the SVM Class of 2016 includes an Olympian, helicopter pilot, professional tennis player, concert pianist, lawyer, Peace Corps volunteer and an Irish dancer?
Thanks and Praise from Grateful Clients

“...the UC Davis Vet Med Clinic crew was there with moral support, a steady hand and reassuring words. We're lucky to have so many great animal people here in Davis. Our family is grateful to you at a time when it really made a difference.”
~ Paul Drobny, Davis

“...(our dog Chief) was transferred to the UC Davis Emergency and Critical Care unit, where veterinary intensive care specialists Dr. Kate Hopper and Dr. Robin McIntyre took charge of his case. He was placed on a ventilator for over three weeks...received constant physical therapy...and made slow and steady progress. The skills of those vets were critical to Chief's survival.”
~ Kent & Amanda M., Marin County

“It was an honor and a privilege working with the wonderful team at the VMTH.”
~ Valerie Penrod, CADL Sacramento

Who's That in the Hall?

Faculty
Dr. Verena Affolter, DVM, PhD, Diplomate ECVP
Professor of Clinical Dermatopathology
• Hometown – Olten, Switzerland
• DVM, University of Bern (Switzerland)
• Hobbies: horseback riding, theatre and enjoying a good wine
• DYK...Dr. Affolter studied theatre in her youth and almost became a professional actress

Staff
Jill Orr
Large Animal Reception
• Hometown – Dixon, California
• Dixon High School
• Hobbies: gardening, volunteering with Dixon civic organizations and her seven kids
• DYK...Jill was the Dixon “Citizen of the Year” in 2008

House Officer
Dr. Leigh Perry, VMD
3rd Year Resident
• Hometown – Norwalk, Connecticut
• VMD, University of Pennsylvania
• Hobbies: working with marine mammals (former seal trainer)
• DYK...Dr. Perry is a green belt in Tang Soo Do

Student
Kristen Elliot
1st Year
• Hometown: Glendale, California
• BS (Animal Science), CalPoly SLO
• Hobbies: reading, jogging and hanging out with her cat Snickers
• DYK...Kristen skipped kindergarten