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... that besides good memories, elephants also have a keen sense of smell? They can smell water from three miles away.

... that the VMTH thanked its technician staff with a luncheon during the recent National Veterinary Technician Week?

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“Dr. Stem is an excellent doctor and invaluable to my establishment of your facility as a world class hospital, one to which I would unquestionably return and recommend.”
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VMTH Helps Perform Surgery on Tiger from Sacramento Zoo

A group of more than 30 veterinarians, physicians, technicians, students and administrators from the VMTH, the Sacramento Zoo and Sutter Medical Group recently joined forces to perform a minimally-invasive surgery on Castro, a 15-year-old Sumatran tiger from the zoo. To prevent stone blockage and any potential pain, the veterinarians and physicians placed a ureteral stent—a thin, flexible tube that will help drain urine from Castro’s kidney to his bladder.

Castro was anesthetized in his habitat the morning of the surgery and transported a short distance to the zoo’s Murray E. Fowler Veterinary Hospital. While Castro was anesthetized, veterinarians took advantage of that time to also perform an abdominal ultrasound and draw blood to see how he is responding to his lymphoma treatment, which he began earlier this year. VMTH oncologists were initially encouraged by the ultrasound images. Blood samples were sent to UC Davis veterinary clinical pathologists for further, conclusive results.

To place the stent, the team was able to use a minimally-invasive method of cystoscopy, a scooping procedure for imaging the inside of the urinary tract, and interventional radiology techniques. They were able to place a small stent through the right kidney, down the ureter and into Castro’s bladder. To our knowledge, this is the first time that this procedure has been performed on a tiger. This stent will relieve the partial obstruction of the ureter. After more than three hours, the team concluded the successful surgery and returned Castro to his habitat where he safely woke up and quickly returned to his normal activities. Veterinarians and physicians alike were pleased with the results of the surgery.

Participating in the procedure from the VMTH were faculty members Drs. Bill Culp, Carrie Palm, Ray Wack and Allison Zwingenberger; resident veterinarian Dr. Katie Delk; technicians Sue Cox, RVT and Conni Noia, RVT; and fourth-year DVM students Jenny Gorman and Becky Pacheco. Dr. Wack, who works as the zoo’s senior veterinarian, is the chief of our Zoological Medicine Service, a joint venture of the VMTH and the UC Davis Wildlife Health Center.

UC Davis and the Sacramento Zoo are grateful for generous donations of equipment for this procedure from GE OEC Medical Systems, Karl Storz Endoscopy, Infiniti Medical and Stille Operating Tables. This collaborative effort of veterinary medicine, human medicine and the medical industry working together to benefit endangered animals like Castro is a great example of the value of a “One Health” approach to the world’s medical and environmental needs.
Dr. Monica Aleman Now Board Certified in Internal Medicine – Neurology

Dr. Monica Aleman, a faculty member in the Large Animal Medicine Service, is now board certified in the sub-specialty of neurology in the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM). Having previously been board certified by ACVIM in the sub-specialty of large animal internal medicine, she becomes one of a short list of specialists who are dual board certified in these two areas.

Dr. Aleman received her veterinary degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 1991, and has been with UC Davis almost continuously since 1992. She received her PhD in neuromuscular disorders in equines from UC Davis in 2004, and has completed two residency programs (Large Animal Internal Medicine – equine emphasis; and Neurology and Neurosurgery). Dr. Aleman provides primary care for patients in the Large Animal Clinic, and is also currently doing research in comparative neurology.

“I firmly believe in translational medicine and the benefits of working across species in both the clinical and research settings,” said Dr. Aleman. “As a member of the Equine and Comparative Neurology Research Group at UC Davis, I am able to conduct studies in both humans and animals.”

Beyond providing care locally, Dr. Aleman recently traveled to Colombia to administer veterinary services to horses with neurololgic disorders. She will also be traveling to Europe in the near future to examine horses in Germany. She has authored or co-authored more than 60 publications, and is a popular speaker in neurology at national and international meetings.

Neurology/Neurosurgery Service Offers New Studies and Clinical Trials

Some of the most difficult cases in all of veterinary medicine are in the fields of neurology and neurosurgery. As neurological disorders can affect the entire body, veterinary neurologists and neurosurgeons not only find themselves working with various parts of the animal (brain, spine, muscles, nerves), but also with various other veterinary specialty services. Thankfully for patients of the VMTH, a team approach is applied so that animals benefit from the expertise of many.

With one of the leading neurology and neurosurgery services of any veterinary hospital, the VMTH has five board-certified faculty neurologists, four resident veterinarians training to be neurology specialists, three highly-trained technicians and a designated referral coordinator. The service has recently increased its appointment availability, and the hospital has upgraded its MRI equipment and hours, now offering 24/7 MRI service with around-the-clock on-call specialists.

The Neurology/Neurosurgery Service provides diagnostic testing, medical care, and surgery for dogs and cats, as well as a consultation service for horses, livestock, exotic species and laboratory animals. The service also provides 24-hour emergency care for animals with immediate neurological or neurosurgical needs.

Beyond standard treatment protocols, the VMTH Neurology/Neurosurgery Service also offers treatment through newly-discovered approaches and clinical trials. If an animal is eligible to participate, these novel treatments could not only benefit the animal, but also the health care of other animals and potentially people in the future. Two current highlights of the service include a study of lambs and calves that will launch patient applications in January, and a brain tumor clinical trial that has provided funded treatment for enrolled dogs. Information on these programs can be found on the UC Davis Veterinary Center for Clinical Trials’ website: www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/clinicaltrials.

As veterinary medicine is an ever-evolving science, UC Davis hopes the therapeutic approaches used to these studies and clinical trials may someday become standard practice for both dogs and humans, allowing for the successful treatment of a range of neurological disorders.

Clinicians and Students Treat Large Group of Camelids

Recently, the VMTH’s Large Animal Clinic provided basic health care to 18 male camels (16 llamas and 2 alpacas) rescued from Nevada. Working in conjunction with the Southwest Llama Rescue, Southeast Llama Rescue and LANA Lifeline, more than 30 veterinary students (including members of the Camelid Medicine Club and seven VMTH clinicians examined the animals. The check-ups included vaccinations, dewormings, castrations, fiber shearing and toenail trimmings. Castrations were necessary on nine of the camels in preparation for rehoming; the remaining nine were either already castrated or too young for castration.

This partnership between the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and the rescue groups allowed the students to gain valuable experience in handling and treating llamas and alpacas, while simultaneously providing needed preventative health care to improve the adoptability and rehoming of these rescued animals. With the majority of large animal cases seen by students being horses and cows, the opportunity to work with a large group of camels is an important experience for our soon-to-be veterinarians.

CASE OF THE MONTH – BOB

VMTH Team Has Success with New Stem Cell Therapy

Bob, a male domestic shorthair cat, was 14-years-old when he came to the VMTH in October 2012. Bob had been suffering from painful feline chronic gingivostomatitis (FCGS) for about a year, causing severe oral inflammation that affected his gums and the back of his mouth. Bob’s owner tried several treatment options with his veterinarian, including extraction of several teeth and medication, to manage the inflammation and pain.

Even with those treatments, Bob continued to suffer from oral inflammation to the point he would paw at his mouth and cry in pain.

Determined to help Bob, his owner brought him to the Dentistry & Oral Surgery Service (DOSS) at the VMTH in hopes of finding a different course of action to treat FCGS. In 60-80 percent of FCGS cases, a cure can be achieved with the standard care of a full-mouth tooth extraction. VMTH oral surgeons performed the extractions, and Bob initially showed minor signs of improvement. By March 2013, however, it was apparent that Bob was not responding positively to the extractions and standard medical treatment.

After exhausting all of the standard methods of care, but not willing to give up, Bob’s owner elected to enroll him in a clinical trial—being conducted by DOSS and the UC Davis Regenerative Medicine Laboratory led by Dr. Dori Borjesson—investigating a novel stem cell therapy to treat FCGS. Because stem cells are known to have anti-inflammatory and regenerative properties, the veterinarians were hopeful that this therapy, which involved extracting and isolating stem cells from Bob’s own fat tissue and injecting them back into Bob, would cure the disease.

After receiving two IV injections of stem cells in May, Bob showed signs of improvement. Bob returned to the VMTH for monthly re-checks, each time showing further marked improvement. By the second re-check appointment, there were no signs of inflammation in Bob’s mouth. Three-, four- and five-month re-checks showed no signs of FCGS returning. With Bob’s success in helping to pioneer this stem cell therapy, the VMTH team continues the clinical trial with many other patients whose owners have recently enrolled them in the study.

The VMTH’s Neurology/Neurosurgery Service successfully treated a variety of neurological and neurosurgical conditions in a large group of camelids. The students were given the opportunity to work with a large group of camelids, adding valuable experience to their veterinary education.

Bob was cured of a painful oral disease through a successful clinical trial treatment.
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From The Director’s Corner

Welcome to the November issue of VMTH View. What an exciting issue we have for you, highlighted by our recent tiger surgery at the Sacramento Zoo. This procedure garnered national attention, as our surgeons and zoo medicine specialists teamed up with human medicine physicians to help a rare Sumatran tiger live a more comfortable life. With less than 500 Sumatran tigers remaining on Earth, what a great experience this was for everyone involved. This procedure is an example of the world class training opportunities available for our students and residents. I commend all involved on a job well done.

I am also pleased to congratulate Dr. Monica Aleman on her most recent board certification in neurology. Monica’s hard work and talent contributes a new level of expertise to the Large Animal Clinic and will benefit not only our patients, clients and referring veterinarians, but also our students and residents. This is Dr. Aleman’s second board certification, and adds to her impressive list of accomplishments during her 20-year career at UC Davis.

We are also seeing many advances through clinical trials performed here at the VMTH. This issue provides great examples of the cutting-edge medicine helping to save our patients’ lives. As these trials progress and encouraging results become available, we look forward to the novel approaches of today becoming the accepted treatment protocols of tomorrow.

I want to thank all the clinicians and staff involved, and Chriussy Kinkade in the Veterinary Center for Clinical Trials, for helping these important clinical advances come to fruition through innovative clinical trials.

Regards,

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

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VMTH clinicians, technicians and students prepare Castro for surgery.

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VMTH View November 2013

LEADING VETERINARY MEDICINE, ADDRESSING SOCIETAL NEEDS

VMTH VIEW

WILLIAM R. PRITCHARD VETERINARY MEDICAL TEACHING HOSPITAL • UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS