vide feeding strategies for animals with particular illnesses.

The Nutrition Support Service has assisted UC Davis staff and students since 1989 in appropriate feeding of VMTH patients while offering a telephone consultation service for referring veterinarians from California, other states and sometimes other countries, as well as for pet owners.

The service consults on home-cooked diet formulations, assists referring veterinarians with problems ranging from obesity management to veterinary therapeutic diet selection and dietary supplement evaluation.

“A great many of our consultation calls deal with evaluating and nutritionally balancing home-cooked diets. Custom home-cooked diets can be invaluable in the management of multiple disease processes where one commercial diet cannot meet all the animal’s needs,” says Dr. Fascetti.

The majority of consultations pertain to dogs and cats, but the service also does nutritional consultations for horses. Equine consultations cover a range of topics, from foal and mare nutrition to dietary supplements.

Not only do Dr. Fascetti and small animal clinical nutrition resident Dr. Sean Delaney see patients, formulate diets and consult on patient and referral cases, but they also teach fourth-year students in the elective clinical nutrition rotation.

The Nutrition Service offers both a traditional residency program and a second program in which graduate students work toward PhD degrees and board certification in nutrition.

Dr. Meri Stratton-Phelps and Dr. Nick Cave are PhD candidates who are also preparing to meet competency requirements for board certification by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition. Dr. Robert Backus, senior research fellow, and Dr. Delaney are also preparing for board certification.

The Nutrition Support Service can be reached at (530) 752-1393, or for more information, visit the VMTH Web site (www.vmth.ucdavis.edu).

**BIOCONTAINMENT FACILITY NEEDED**

**UC DAVIS PROPOSES THE WESTERN NATIONAL CENTER FOR BIODEFENSE AND EMERGING DISEASES**

In order to meet a national need, UC Davis faculty and administrators propose construction of a high-containment laboratory on the UC Davis campus—no such facility exists in the western United States.

The “Biosafety Level 4” facility, if funded by the National Institutes of Health, would become part of an initiative to create a Western National Center for Biodefense and Emerging Diseases (WNCBED). “The facility will support research on vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics for use against infectious diseases,” says Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Virginia Hinshaw, a virologist in the School of Veterinary Medicine.

UC Davis—with its expertise and resources that include the medical school, veterinary school, national primate research center, college of agriculture and environmental sciences and veterinary diagnostic laboratory—is well suited to meet regional and national needs for enhanced efforts and research in addressing public health threats, Dr. Hinshaw says. “We have to do our part to protect public health.”

The proposed center and biocontainment lab would allow West Coast researchers to study and diagnose not only infectious diseases that currently threaten California—such as hantavirus, Lyme disease, and West Nile encephalitis (West Nile encephalitis virus has spread across the country and has recently been confirmed in California)—but also diseases such as rabies, botulism or anthrax, which occurs naturally in the soils of California.

Level 4 is the designation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the highest level of containment standards. Level 4 facilities and procedures are designed to protect scientists from highly contagious infectious disease agents, those that cause untreatable illnesses, or potentially lethal unidentified agents, and to protect the public by preventing release of such agents into the environment.

“The primary goal of the center is to study naturally occurring diseases that require high-containment BSL-3 and BSL-4 facilities,” says Bennie Osburn: “While the threat of bioterrorist activities is a factor in the development of this center, these naturally occurring diseases are already with us—if we are to protect ourselves, we must understand them better, be able to rapidly diagnose them, and develop containment strategies, treatments and vaccines.”

Locating the WNCBED on the UC Davis campus will enable researchers from several disciplines to collaborate, and will allow the exchange ideas and information. Dr. Osburn says, “It will take a cadre of individuals working together to make significant accomplishments.” It is also very important that the facility be located at the university, where we are educating the next generation of researchers and teachers, he says.

The proposal for the Western National Center for Biodefense and Emerging Diseases was submitted to the NIH in February 2003.

“Our commitment is to improving the health of animals and humans.”

—Bennie Osburn

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