



# SVME Newsletter

Newsletter of the Society for  
Veterinary Medical Ethics

Winter 2011

## President's Message Winter 2011



**Alice Villalobos, DVM, DPNAP**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Since becoming your SVME President at the July AVMA Meeting, I have committed the SVME to undergo revitalization with 2 working goals. The first SVME goal is to provide an interactive home base for ethics instructors in American veterinary colleges. We are asking the entire SVME membership to identify the instructors who provide ethics courses in veterinary colleges. If you know who teaches ethics in your state/local college, please forward their email address to me at

[dralice@aol.com](mailto:dralice@aol.com) . We have identified instructors for, Tufts, GA, UCD, WU, CSU, WA, Ross, IA, OH, TN, MN, MS, UP and NCSU, all the others are needed.

The second goal set for SVME is to help standardize the teaching of ethics to veterinary students. Last July, the SVME BOD approved Dr. John McCarthy to lead the way for an ethics CE course. Since then, we formed the On Line Ethics Course Committee (OLECC) with Dr. Jose Peralta and Dr. Diane Levitan. The finished course will have the edits and blessings of icons in the field of veterinary ethics who are also former SVME Presidents, Jerrold Tannenbaum, JD, of UC Davis, and Bernie Rollin, Ph.D. of CSU. The OLECC will create an on line Veterinary Medical Ethics Course which ethics instructors may use as a template for classes or to interactively guide students through while they are taking the course. Our SVME goals may be expanded globally as we have been encouraged by ethics instructors in South America and some major European colleges, including Dr. Denise Remy, European Master of Bioethics/Erasmus Mundus Master of Bioethics. Dr. Remy is a member of SVME. She is Professor of Surgery at VetAgro Sup and teaches ethics at the oldest veterinary college in the world, which was originally founded in

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1761 as Ecole Nationale Veterinaire de Lyon in France. The next oldest colleges, Alfort, founded in 1765 and Musee Fragonard, founded in 1766 were also in France.

2011 has been proclaimed World Veterinary Year by many nations to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the first veterinary college in the world. The first veterinary schools in the New World were established in Lima, Peru in 1551, the National Autonomous Univ. of Mexico in 1853 and at Guelph, Canada in 1862. Harvard University opened the first veterinary college in 1863. Dr. Fred Born of the American Veterinary Historical society created an informative DVD titled, The History of the Horse Doctor, which provides our profession's history since 2100 BC. Dr. Born's DVD may be viewed this month at: <http://www.amvm.org/pdfs/HorseDoctor.pdf>.

Throughout history, compassionate veterinarians have recognized and documented the pain and plight of animals although they could not do much about it other than restraint. Only recently has our profession gained expertise in addressing animal pain, including their emotional pain and distress. After being mired in debate for some time, AVMA Executive Board, with recommendations of the Animal Welfare Committee and the leadership of President-Elect, Dr. Rene Carlson, approved revision of the Veterinarian's Oath to explicitly state that veterinarians have a responsibility to promote and protect animal well-being and to prevent as well as treat animal suffering. Has this been an ethics issue for you all along? Why of course it has! Many of us who graduated over 15 years ago struggled through haunting dilemmas of animal suffering routinely encountered in veterinary school and practice. The founders of SVME, its Past Presidents, including the late Dr. Anna Worth, every SVME member, especially new student members, all heartily embrace the revised Veterinarian's Oath for its proactive stance and commitment to animal welfare. In 2010, the AVMA's Board of Veterinary Specialties was petitioned to recognize the American College of Animal Welfare (ACAW). Quoting Carlson and Worth, "The time has come. The time is now."



Wishing you enrichment of spirit & experiences in 2011,

Luv-in-pets,

**Alice**

### ***Know someone who might be interested in joining the SVME?***

Go to the SVME website ([www.svme.org](http://www.svme.org)) to download a membership form.

Remember, student membership in the SVME is *free* so encourage veterinary students to get involved!

## Member Forum

Please get into the habit of going to [www.svme.org](http://www.svme.org) , the SVME web site home page and check out each tab. Click Member then click Member Forum on the left column of the Member page. We want you, our valued SVME members, to be interactive on the Member Forum Message Board! Feel free to post ethical dilemmas and ask questions. You will receive opinions from experts and colleagues. Most importantly, we want you to make your viewpoints known on topics posted. Please break the silent majority and start writing and posting your thoughts, feelings and comments at the Member Forums.

Our group is small and very courteous. Do not be afraid of generating arrogance or hostility. We want you to have the answers you need on ethical dilemmas during your entire career! The role of the SVME and its Forum is to allow participants and experienced member ethicists to analyze and interpret problems from various perspectives (especially an opponent's) and to ask the difficult questions. The role of the ethicist is to steadfastly remind colleagues, stake holders and society to develop an open mind regarding differences and will ask individuals to do the right thing, despite the actions of others. SVME has an ongoing discussion regarding palliative care and pet hospice.

## WELCOME NEW STUDENT MEMBERS!

The SVME would like you to remain as permanent members after graduating from veterinary college. Seldom does a day go by when a veterinarian is free from the responsibility of pondering over decision making issues that extend beyond straightforward medical training. Veterinarians must often juggle issues involving ethics, economics and empathy when they provide services for terminally ill, feeble, and cancer stricken patients. Veterinarians must treat and communicate with clients honestly. To be ethical and honest, you must examine your broad based belief systems, values and personal biases because this affects how you relate to and influence your clients.

The goal in ethical veterinary decision making, especially as we struggle to help the pets of our recession battered clientele, is to arrive at reasonable decisions that are in the best interest of the patient. By remaining a member of the SVME, you can always post encountered dilemmas on the Member Forum for discussion and debate to get help in solving difficult situations. The SVME is looking forward to your active participation as students and future colleagues. Plan on attending the SVME Ethics Sessions and Business Meetings held at the AVMA Annual Conventions this year in St. Louis and next year in San Diego.

## Veterinary Medical Ethics: Caring for the Companions of the Poor

*By Donald H. DeForge*

In 1847 the American Medical Association revolutionized medicine in the United States as they met in Philadelphia as the first national professional medical organization in the world dedicating themselves to standards for professional education, training, and conduct. They unanimously adopted the world's first national code of professional ethics in medicine. For more than 160 years since, the AMA's Code of Medical Ethics has been the authoritative guide for practicing physicians. The Code links theory and practice, and ethical principles and real world dilemmas in the care of patients.

One hundred and forty seven years later The Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics [SVME] was founded in 1994. It was organized by a group of veterinarians, biomedical researchers, and academics to promote discussion and debate about ethical issues arising in and relevant to veterinary practice. The first two objectives of the SVME are: [1] To encourage ethical practices and professional behavior of veterinarians in all aspects of the profession and; [2] to increase the understanding of the philosophical, social, moral, and ethical values encountered by the veterinary profession.

### The AMA's Medical Ethics Code [Opinion 9.0650] - ***Caring for the Poor***

"Each physician has an obligation to share in providing care to the indigent. The measure of what constitutes an appropriate contribution may vary with circumstances such as community characteristics, geographic location, the nature of the physician's practice or specialty, and other conditions. All physicians should work to ensure that the needs of the poor should be a regular part of the physician's practice schedule. In the poorest communities, it may not be possible to meet the needs of the indigent for physicians' services by relying solely on local physicians. The local physicians should be able to turn for assistance to their colleagues in prosperous communities, particularly those in close proximity. Physicians meeting with their obligations are encouraged to do so, in a number of ways such as seeing indigent patients in their offices at no cost or reduced cost, serving at freestanding or hospital clinics that treat the poor, and participating in government programs that provide health care to the poor...."

As we embark on 2011, veterinarians must make a conscientious attempt to understand their obligation for the ***Caring of Companions of the Poor***. Thousands of dogs and cats suffer great pain each year because their owners cannot afford the cost of New Millennium veterinary services.

Even more tragic, thousands of others are euthanized that could have had quality pain free lives with the proper medical attention. Our diagnostic equipment equals that in human medicine, specialists are available as in human medicine, anesthesia is safer than ever and yet it is unavailable to the poor. The Great Recession has put a strain on all aspects of veterinary care from general practice, to specialty center, and even to the university hospital. That is a "given" and has produced a stressful situation that all administrators and hospital owners must live with as an actuality. While the veterinarian tightens their "belts of survival," the poor are even further disenfranchised from assistance.

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Have we become a veterinary society that only helps those with CREDIT CARDS and excludes all others from compassionate care? Has economics replaced our ethical responsibility to remove suffering and control pain? Does a veterinary emergency room have the right to send someone away because they are poor while their companion is suffering? Reread the AMA's Medical Ethics Code of Caring for the Poor and answer these questions for yourself.

We as a veterinary profession cannot excuse away our care of The Companions of the Poor by stating that the human system is buffered by social welfare programs and health insurance. That is the "cop-out" and the conscience-clearing attempt of avoiding THE issue. No one can legislate CARING! Each state must take a close look at the "turn-aways" and consider whether right or wrong has occurred in each individual circumstance. Helping at a Rabies Clinic in your community is a nice gesture but it does not replace assisting those, in emergency situations, with limited or no income with reduced fees or extended credit in a healthy or recessional economy.

It is my belief that the word COMPASSION must be a part of each state license act. State licensure should read... "the individual tested by our Board according to the laws and regulations relative to registration in this state entitles the individual to the right to practice veterinary medicine and surgery with exactitude and COMPASSION."

Two standards cannot exist; the treatment of those who can afford and the lack of help to the indigent. The exams, testing, specialist intervention, and care must not be separated by a "door with no handle!" The door should open from both sides to both parties. For those who believe this discussion is veterinary socialized medicine, the point has been missed. Compassion is not "socialism" but social conscience. Once veterinary medicine loses social conscience, the profession will become faceless. A faceless veterinary profession will be scorned with fewer vocations as young brilliant minds look to collateral medical careers.

It is a fact that there are human physicians, chiropractors, dentists, podiatrists, etc. that lack compassion in the Care of the Poor. It is also true that the veterinary profession as a whole will never be one hundred percent behind Caring for the Companions of the Poor. That should not deter this dialogue.

Dr. Leo Bustad, humanitarian, scientist, educator, and Dean of Washington State University for a decade was co-founder of the Delta Society. He was a pioneer in the significance of the Human-Animal Bond. Dr. Bustad told the story many times of the old man by the sea shore who spent hours putting star fish back into the ocean that had been washed onto shore by the rising tide. He comments in the story that a young man seeing this occurring mocks his elderly counterpart and says to him "old man what a foolish task....you put one back and there are one hundred more washing up right beside you." The old man looks away and continues his work. He then addresses the young man..." look carefully..... what are important are the ones that I have helped." At that point, the young man stops, bends over, and helps the old man return new starfish back to the sea.

In honor of Dr. Leo Bustad, we must continue his mission and begin again returning the starfish to the sea...one starfish at a time. We must remember that the Human-Animal Bond is not a credit card or a multi-thousand dollar payment for veterinary services but a contract in CARE and COMPASSION. Remuneration is important but COMPASSION is the key to the designation of the title, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, which we carry to our workplace each day. Being called doctor is a privilege and with that privilege we cannot ignore our responsibility to society and The Companions of the Poor. ▲

## Student Essay Contest

SVME has already had an excellent response from the ethics students at Iowa State. The SVME thanks Dr. M. Howard for inspiring students to enter the Student Essay Contest! Thanks to the continued commitment from the WALTHAM Center for Pet Nutrition, the winner receives \$1,000.00 and another \$1,000.00 travel stipend to attend AVMA 2011 in St. Louis to present the winning essay at the Ethics Plenary Session. This year, the winner is also invited to participate in the Noon Round Table Forums on Palliative and Hospice Care on Saturday and Sunday of the AVMA Meeting. This is a fantastic prize and a great opportunity to present a major meeting. Last year's winner was Kristin Tvrdik, Iowa State, Class of 2012.

### Student Essay Contest Question for 2011:

**Is there an ethical obligation for veterinarians to discuss palliative, end of life and hospice care with clients caring for terminal patients?**

*In your response, please touch on the ethical, medical, legal, financial and psychosocial dilemmas associated with those discussions. Discuss the ethical and moral responsibilities of attending veterinarians, whether they are generalists, specialists or emergency clinicians. You may use examples of patients with advanced cancer, patients with co morbid conditions, geriatric patients, and emergency room patients.*

**Limit essay to 3,000 words: introduction, body and conclusion or summary.**

## OLECC Report

The On Line Ethics Course Committee reports that Course One and Two are completed with 4 more modules to follow in 2011. Dr. Villalobos established a very positive working relationship with the North American Pet Health Insurance Association (NAPHIA) for hosting the on line Ethics CE course at no cost as part of their resource program. Dr. Jack Stephens and former ED, Mr. Loran Hickton will personally assure that NAPHIA will fully support administration of this much needed ethics course for veterinary students.

## EVENTS

### World Veterinary Year Celebration, Vet2011

The veterinary profession will be celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first veterinary school in the world, founded by Claude Bourgelat (1712 - 1779) in Lyon, France, in 1761. Bourgelat also worked very hard to establish the veterinary profession. The Official Opening Ceremony of World Veterinary Year will be on January 24, 2011, at the Palais des Congrès de Versailles (Palace of Versailles), France. An estimated 800 attendees are expected to attend this celebratory Symposium.

Bourgelat devoted most of resources to the diseases of the whip," along with his publications equine economics, led to his renowned horseman. This honor man of choice to lead and become departure in the French authorization by the King to open principles and methods of curing taught." It was called Ecole Nationale Veterinaire de Lyon (The National Veterinary School of Lyon). The success of the Lyon veterinary school was immediate and it became well known throughout the world. Bourgelat was a member of the [French Academy of Sciences](#) (1752) and the [Prussian Academy of Sciences](#) (1763).



the first school's attention and horse. Bourgelat's "skill with the and practical experience in recognition as an internationally distinguished Bourgelat as the founder for a new and strange educational system. He obtained the school in Lyon "In which the livestock diseases would be publicly Veterinaire de Lyon (The National

Reference source: [www.vet2011.org](http://www.vet2011.org)

Contributed by Fred J. Born, DVM

### Annual Meeting

The SVME will hold its annual business meeting and BOD meeting at the AVMA Conference Hotel, in St. Louis, directly after the Ethics Sessions on Monday July 18, 2011. The SVME organizes the Ethics Program for AVMA. This year's theme is: *Controversy to Consensus: Impact of Public Opinion/Social Ethics*. Speakers and Topics are: Dr. Robert M. Miller on Equine Ethics, Dr. Patricia Olson, Ph.D., on Pets in Clinical Trials, Dr. Jose Peralta, Ph.D., on Student Issues. Dr. Paul Pion, ACVIM, on Honesty in the VIN Community and Dr. Alice Villalobos, DPNAP, on Obligations of Palliative Care and on "Pay or Kill" Policy.

Next year, the AVMA Convention will be held in San Diego, August 4-8, 2012. Mark your calendars now to attend and support your SVME!

## Shomer Award

The SVME is accepting nominations for the 2011 SVME Shomer Award. To date, there are two nominees:

- ◆ **Dr. Franklin M. Loew** was nominated posthumously by Jerrold Tannenbaum, JD, who is a Past President of SVME and the 2009 Shomer Ethics Award Recipient

Dr. Franklin M. Loew, a visionary leader in the specialty of laboratory animal medicine, joined Dr. Robert Shomer to create the SVME. During his entire career, Dr. Loew was one of the strongest advocates for promoting and teaching ethics and animal welfare in veterinary colleges. He served as Dean at Cornell and at Tufts. He supported the creation of the Ethics and Values Signature Program at Tufts, as well as the Center for Animals and Public Policy and their Masters Program, which remains the only one of its kind. Dr. Loew was twenty years ahead of his time in inspiring and urging veterinarians to take animal welfare issues seriously. The Shomer award would be given posthumously to honor this great man and friend of many of the founding fathers of the SVME.

- ◆ **Dr. Frank McMillan** was nominated by Dr. Alice Villalobos.

Dr. Franklin D. McMillan, is a board certified internist. He is published in the area of animal mental health and subjective well being, quality of life, animal welfare, the relieving of emotional pains of animals and creating happiness for animals. After many years in private practice, Dr. McMillan is now working as Head Veterinarian at the headquarters of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Moab, Utah where he strives to enrich the lives of their hundreds of rescued animals

## When is garbage not garbage? When it's oil.

Akinori Ito, the CEO of Blest, a Japanese company, invented a machine that turns mountains of plastic waste into a new source of oil. Whether it is bags, bottles or caps, excessive plastic waste is flooding our landfills and recycling is too energy and time intensive to make much of a difference and usually results in other forms of plastic. This oil conversion machine is being used in farms, fisheries, and small factories in Japan with hopes of shipping more abroad. One kilogram of plastic waste can be turned into one liter of oil which can be further refined to become gas, diesel fuel or kerosene. Feel free to take a look at the video on the Care2.com website to learn more about this invention.

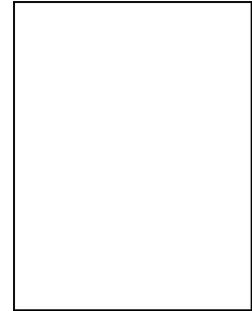
<http://www.care2.com/causes/global-warming/blog/machine-converts-plastic-trash-into-oil-video/>

Please continue to recycle in 2011 until one of these converting machines is in your own clinic!

## WELCOME NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS

The SVME Articles allowed us to hold a special email election for new Board of Director members. We are happy to announce that the SVME membership voted in all three excellent candidates who accepted SVME BOD nomination for two years.

**Lide Doffermyre, DVM** is a General and Holistic Practitioner in North Carolina. Dr. Doffermyre is a member of: AVMA, NCVMA, HSVMA, NCVMA, also serving on the Student Essay Review Committee and will attend the SVME BOD meeting at AVMA 2011. Her email address is:



**Jose M. Peralta, DVM, MSc, PhD** is Associate Professor, Animal Welfare and Veterinary Ethics, College of Veterinary Medicine, Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona CA 91766. Dr. Peralta is scheduled to present at the Ethics Sessions during AVMA 2011 on student issues. He is also serving as a Committee Member and Contributor for the SVME on line CE Ethics Course.

His email address is: [jperalta@westernu.edu](mailto:jperalta@westernu.edu)

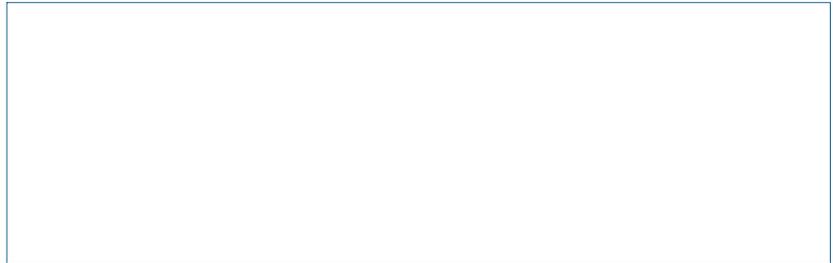


**Leland Shapiro, Ph.D.** is Chair of the Agriculture Department. Director, Pre-Veterinary Science Program, L.A. Pierce College, Dr. Shapiro's Ph.D. is in reproduction. He has also completed 2 post doc courses in bioethics at Georgetown and Iowa State. He is the author of the textbook, *Applied Animal Ethics*, 2nd Edition, Ari Farms, 2007. Dr. Shapiro is a member [or Head of] of the Student Essay Review Committee.

His email address is: [drcows@aol.com](mailto:drcows@aol.com)



c/o Gary Block DVM  
OSVS  
1480 South County Trail  
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## SVME Mission Statement

The Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics was founded in 1994 by a group of veterinarians, biomedical researchers and academics to promote discussion and debate about ethical issues arising in and relevant to veterinary practice. The SVME publishes a newsletter, provides a listserv, holds an annual meeting at the AVMA convention, sponsors an annual student essay contest and honors an individual annually with the Shomer Award for outstanding contributions to veterinary medical ethics.

*Individuals interested in information or in joining the SVME can visit the SVME website below to learn more about the organization.*

[www.svme.org/](http://www.svme.org/)

