

SVME NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm just days away from retirement from my job of 21 years as Director of the Office of Laboratory Animal Medicine at the University of Missouri. May 14 is my last day, although I expect to be "re-employed" by the University for at least a few months. My collection of 21 years of filed away paper is rather impressive, at least in its volume if not its content. I'm beginning to clean out some files to avoid the last minute rush and also to improve my environmentalist self-image by recycling the paper back in circulation. Today I started with the files related to the status of animals. It includes the files under "animal rights," "animal welfare," "pet theft," and "bioethics," among others of similar ilk. I've sustained an interest in these kinds of things since high school. My post high school career, to date, consisted of college in zoology, starting in 1960, then veterinary school, about 9 years in the US Army that included 4 years at the US Army Biomedical Laboratories, and 4 years at a contract toxicology laboratory. My career has thus spanned an era of enormous change in the status of nonhuman animals in our society.

Perhaps more change in the status of animals has occurred during these four decades than in any other period of equal duration in human history. Some SVME members would recall specific articles and letters from my files and their authors names. They include John Boyce, Carl Cohen, Larry Horten, Fred Jacobs, Lannie Kraus, Katie McCabe, Adrian Morrison, Jerry Tannenbaum, and Bob Speth. There's even an article about pets stolen for research by Judith Reitman in Penthouse Magazine. Ms. Reitman mentions Rick Fish and me in a somewhat unfavorable light – but there's also good news, at least there are no pictures of us. On second thought, this stuff is too good to discard now, I think I'll wait until closer to the end of my "re-employment" term to recycle these files.

One illustration of the degree of change in attitudes about animals between the 1960s and today may be in thought about killing animals to teach surgery in veterinary schools. In the 60s most veterinary students performed numerous

(Continued on next page)

major surgical procedures on the same dogs over the course of several weeks. Then, probably more than now, veterinarians were typically in practice, often on their own, within days of receiving the degree. There wasn't much time for guided experience. I believe the norm was to give these dogs extremely attentive high quality postoperative care and extraordinarily gentle treatment. Nevertheless it's clear to me, with the improved vision provided by my retrospectroscope and senior citizen status, that these dogs were subjected to too much surgery. Now many veterinary students have concerns about the ethical implications of terminal surgery conducted for their education. Many seek alternatives.

Sally Walshaw, VMD, of Michigan State University, recently wrote an e-mail message to a student who asked her advice about how to deal with such concerns. Suspecting that Sally's message might be a classic, I asked her to send me a copy. I think it lucidly makes most of the really important points about terminal veterinary medical student surgery in the least possible number of words. You also need to know that Sally's husband Richard Walshaw is a board certified veterinary surgeon. Sally gave me permission to share the message.

The student asked for Sally's personal feelings about the surgery laboratory because the student "didn't feel right about the nonrecovery surgeries." The student was hesitant to take the alternatives route because of an additional 6 weeks time required. Sally replied:

"If you were overjoyed about the opportunity to euthanize dogs, I would wonder why we ever let you into veterinary college. Taking the life of an animal should always be a very important moment for a veterinarian.

On the other hand, I can think of no better justification for the use of animals in teaching than to train veterinary students who will dedicate their lives to helping animals. With regard to learning surgery skills, I believe that the opportunity to practice first on non-survival animals is very humane for the

animal and for the person. I was not, unlike my spouse, a 'born surgeon.' I found surgery difficult at first and I have a great deal of gratitude for my student surgery dogs. Even Dr. Richard Walshaw takes the time to learn new techniques, such as microvascular surgery, by using non-survival animals, before trying a new procedure on a client-owned animal.

The dogs used in the student surgery lab were scheduled for euthanasia. The end result is the same, but there is a BIG difference if they come to CVM for non-survival surgery first. For the past 6 years, the student surgery classes have included a session on how to minimize pain and distress to the dogs. As the teacher of this session, I emphasize the importance of showing affection and kindness to these dogs. For some of these dogs, the veterinary students will be the nicest people they have ever known. It seems to me that these dogs deserve a gentle goodbye and the special attention that they receive from the students. It continues to be a tragedy that pet overpopulation results in euthanasia of so many nice animals. At least, through the student surgery labs, the dogs have helped in the education of veterinarians.

Whatever you decide, keep your good kind heart. And remember to be kind to creatures great and small, even the humans."

Thanks again Sally!

I hope that many SVME members will attend the SVME Annual Meeting starting at 8:00 AM on Saturday July 22, 2000 in Room 250 D of the Convention Center in Salt Lake City. The Program Committee has arranged for the delivery of important discussion of timely current veterinary medical ethical issues. There will be a three-part presentation on Ethical Relationships Between Veterinarians and Humane Organizations and a two part presentation on Ethical Issues in a Large Corporate Veterinary Practice. Each of the sessions will be followed by a panel discussion. We plan a brief business meeting and the installation of new officers after the final panel discussion. Hope to see you there.

Ron

*Ron (Ronald M. McLaughlin), DVM
President, SVME*

**BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE VETERINARY PROFESSION:
ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Many of us in the veterinary profession have observed considerable change in our profession in recent years. The veterinary profession has evolved into a complex collection of individuals with very diverse duties, interests and responsibilities. There are, no doubt, more career opportunities in veterinary medicine today than in any other profession or discipline. Some within the profession embrace these changes, while others ignore or resist them. Regardless of one's position, there are trends and events occurring within and external to the profession that will have a profound impact on the future of veterinary medicine and what it means to be a professional. Many of these changes encompass important ethical issues. The *SVME Newsletter* is one venue that SVME members and others can use to share ideas on our changing profession. From my perspective there are two core questions that need to be addressed. The first is "What is a veterinarian?" The second is "Who is or should be responsible for admittance of individuals to the profession?" You are invited to respond to these questions and others that are presented below.

"What is a veterinarian?" If we can define what a modern veterinarian is, does this mean that all veterinarians must possess a core body of knowledge and a set of fundamental skills regardless of how they choose to practice veterinary medicine? Or, "Is it an outdated concept that all veterinarians meet the previous criteria?" In either case, "Who should determine what knowledge and skills a veterinarian should possess?" Is this the responsibility of college faculties, the Council of Education of the AVMA, the National Board of Examiners for Veterinary Medicine, each state's board of examiners or some other group? How often do these groups engage in collective dialogue on this issue? Does the public have any say in the issue? Historically considerable debate has occurred about entry level knowledge of veterinarians. There has not been as much emphasis on the skills that a veterinarian needs. Should all entry-level veterinarians be able to demonstrate communication and reasonable interpersonal skills? Should all entry-level veterinarians be able to obtain patient history, perform a thorough physical examination on all commonly encountered domestic species, interpret fundamental diagnostic tests and perform specific surgeries? If the answer is affirmative to any of the latter questions, then who is responsible for assessing these skills?

Who is or should be responsible for admittance of individuals to the veterinary profession? This is the province of administrative ethics or "Is it?" Administratively, state licensing boards determine who is allowed to practice veterinary medicine in a given state. For complex reasons, many of these boards rely on the results of standardized test instruments administered by other agencies. These test instruments assess entry-level knowledge. Should there also be assessment of entry-level skills to practice veterinary medicine? Should this skill assessment be standardized? Most examining boards are not equipped to assess these skills. If the state examining boards are not able to perform this assessment, should it be the responsibility of accredited colleges of veterinary medicine? Some college faculty may not be willing to make these judgements. If this were the case, then the bodies that would determine who enters the veterinary profession would be the admissions committees of the respective veterinary colleges. Is this what the profession wants and needs? Will this be in the best interest of the public?

We have posed many questions. We welcome your response.

Don

Don Draper, DVM
President-Elect, SVME

—MEMBER NEWS—

Update on SVME student chapter at UPENN

The encouraging aspects of starting an ethics group here at PENN are that the students seem to be genuinely interested in ethical topics (more than 50 students have expressed a desire to participate), the faculty is certainly supportive of our becoming more savvy on these topics, and there is little room in our formal schedule for more ethics education or expression.

The problems we have faced are also multiple. First, it seems that everyone has a different, specific topic he or she would like to see addressed, so that even though there was a wash of initial enthusiasm, specific gatherings seem destined to be thinly attended. Also, people have already formed all sorts of strong opinions about things, and I think we could slip into a war of the view-

points without proper guidance. Lastly, I really had my heart set on bringing in people from the industry, who work in practices and for labs, zoos, and other arenas to talk about the issues they see on a regular basis, and how they sort those issues out. My motivation for reaching outside the Penn community is that we have a pretty unusual setting here with the huge hospital, all the technical equipment and personnel. By having people in private practice, etc., come in, we get the perspective of what it is like to live one's life as a veterinarian out in the world.

In the meantime, we had talks scheduled with Nadine Hackman, Lily Duda, and Adrian Morrison in February and March. We would welcome with open arms anyone else who would like to come present topics and discuss them with us.

Tracy Norman

ANNOUNCEMENTS, MEETINGS, PROGRAMS

AALS Slated for November

The next American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) meeting will be held in November 5-9, 2000 in San Diego, CA. For more information you can visit the web site of the society.

http://www.aalas.org/education/meetings/2000_NM/

NEWSLETTER ON WWW

This issue of the *SVME Newsletter* is the third that will be available on the web site of the society. The newsletter is available at the new society web site: <http://www.geocities.com/~amazondoc/SVME.html>

All future issues of the newsletter will also be posted on the web site. An an-

nouncement will be made on the VETETHIC list to inform you when each new issue is available.

Members who still wish to receive a hard copy of the newsletter may do so by contacting newsletter editor Sylvie Cloutier at scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu.

Editor's note...

The next SVME Newsletter will be out in September 2000. If you consider contributing to the Newsletter, please send your text before September 1, 2000. I can be contacted at scloutie@vetmed.wsu.edu or c/o Department of VCAPP, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, Pullman, WA, 99164-6520

Sylvie Cloutier, PhD
Editor, SVME

SVME DUES NOTICE

Ronald L. McLaughlin, DVM, President
Donald D. Draper, DVM, Ph.D., President-Elect
Robert C. Speth, Ph.D., Past-President
Ione L. Smith DVM, Secretary
Hal L. Jenkins, DVM., Treasurer
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Larry G. Carbone, DVM, Historian

May 20, 2000

We are sending this dues notice with the Newsletter to save on postage costs. Dues for 2000-2001 are now payable. We appreciate your past support and look forward to a new and even better year for the Society. The dues payment of \$20.00 (\$5.00 for students) is payable to: ***Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics or SVME***. Membership will be in force from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001.

Send checks to: SVME c/o Hal L. Jenkins,
Baseline Animal Clinic Ltd,
220 E. Baseline Road,
Tempe AZ 85283

Payment Date: _____ Check Number: _____

Please return this section of the form with your dues payment (see amounts above) to help us keep our records up to date.

NAME and ADDRESS CORRECTION IF NECESSARY:

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Check this box if you are not on VETETHIC and would like to be.

(Email address is required)

BOOK REVIEW:***Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals***

Cast within the framework of the animal rights philosophy, *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals* proposes a “paradigm shift” whereby two of the great apes, chimpanzees and bonobos, would be included into the domain of personhood, with all the legal rights and privileges accorded to humans. There is very little new in this book. Those who have read Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* will easily recognize Wise’s book as another “me too” animal rights treatise, this time with legal implications. One does not have to read beyond the first chapter in which Wise viciously savages biomedical research, analogizing it to crimes against prisoners of war, to recognize that this book is a rehash of the animal rights propaganda of Singer, whom Wise acknowledges for assistance in writing the book.

In *Rattling the Cage*, Wise tries to convince us that we should see an ape when we look into a mirror. Does he really expect rational human beings to swallow such an illusion that flies in the face of simple logic and common sense? Borrowing heavily from Singer’s defective human argument, i.e., that apes are more intelligent than mentally retarded humans, Wise attempts to reclassify human rights based on intellectual capacity rather than upon humanity. In so doing he attempts to eliminate humanity as the criterion for personhood. So zealous is Wise in his commitment to this cause that he denigrates the dignity of his own children to argue that

by Steven M. Wise
Foreword by Jane Goodall
Perseus Publishing, February 2000
332 pages Retail Price \$25.00
ISBN: 0738200654

chimpanzees are superior to them. But he doesn’t stop there!

Religion is wrong, animal research is wrong, humans are committing genocide against chimpanzees, and, all humans who reject the animal rights philosophy are autistic and narcissistic. The use of animals for human purposes is slavery (The Dred Scott case is mentioned repeatedly in the book to analogize Wise’s view of the plight of apes). I found it almost amusing that near the end of the book (page 265) he inadvertently characterizes the work of Roger Fouts, a primatologist who endorsed this book, as being genocide. Wise’s book is at times so sophomoric (e.g., chimps can write as well as Dr. Seuss) as to make me wonder if I am an Alice in Wisian Wonderland.

Surprisingly, in Chapter 4, “Border Crossings,” he describes the absurdities of applying human law to animals, the examples of which clearly contradict his arguments for granting personhood to apes. The only possible purpose for such a chapter in this book is to strengthen his argument that legal personhood should only be granted to primates. This arbitrary restriction is needed to

hide the applicability of his Darwinian Continuum arguments for legal personhood for apes, from being applied to other species such as dogs, horses and rodents. I can not help but think that Charles Darwin is rolling over in his grave at Wise’s abuse of the theory of evolution.

Although Wise presents an impressive array of footnotes (1408 by rough count) to plead

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

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BOOK REVIEW (CONTINUED)

his case, the book can be reduced to 3 standard arguments of animal rightism: 1) if we freed the slaves we must therefore free the apes, 2) Evolutionary theory shows a strong biological similarity between apes and humans so we must recognize them as our equals, 3) apes are more intelligent than defective human beings and children, so if we accord human rights to these inferior humans, then we must accord personhood to apes

To borrow from Wise's penchant from absurd analogies, his failure stems from his inability to turn water into wine and lead into gold. No matter how many imaginary scenarios he devises,

no matter how defamatory his characterization of biomedical research, no matter how provocative his analogies, no matter how intensely he attacks religion, he can not reverse the simple, fundamental fact that apes are not humans.

Although the arguments presented to grant legal personhood to apes are couched as an exercise in nobility, the potential for these efforts to solicit an animal clientele wronged by humans (with the attendant affirmative action mandates and ensuing damage claims against practitioners of genocide such as Fouts) have implications for the

legal system that make ambulance chasing look tame by comparison.

Goodall's suggestion that this book is "The Animals' Magna Carta," would be more correctly considered to be "The Animals' Manifesto." Must we replay Marx and Engels "paradigm shift" with great apes cast as the proletariat?

It is not worth wading through 270 pages of spurious arguments to arrive at Wise's final impotent plea to "knock down ... the ancient Great Wall that has for so long divided humans from every other animal."

Robert C. Speth, Ph.D.

—New books of interest—

Here is a list of recently published books that could be of interest to SVME members. I encourage any member who would like to review one of these books or any other books that could be of interest to the members for the next issues to let me know.

Veterinary Ethics : An Introduction by Giles Legood; 2000.

Animal Rights : A Subject Guide, Bibliography, and Internet Companion by John M. Kistler, Marc Bekoff; 2000.

Applied Animal Ethics by Leland S. Shapiro; 1999.

What Should We Do About Animal Welfare? by Michael C. Appleby; 1999.

An Introduction to Veterinary Medical Ethics : Theory and Cases by Bernard E. Rollin. Paperback; 1999.

**Sharing
Book Reviews
with members
could be
regular feature
of SVME**

Sylvie

ETHICS PROGRAM FOR THE AVMA ANNUAL MEETING

The Ethics Program for the AVMA Annual Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 22, 2000. This meeting is organized and co-sponsored by the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics. The program, during the meeting of the Society, will be held in room 250D. All interested individuals are encouraged to attend:

Saturday, July 22, 2000 (Morning) *Ethics Program*

- 8:00-8:45 Ethical Relationships Between Veterinarians and Humane Organizations, Part I – Dr. William Folger
- 8:45-9:30 Ethical Relationships Between Veterinarians and Humane Organizations, Part II – Dr. Larry Hawk
- 10:15-11:00 Ethical Relationships Between Veterinarians and Humane Organizations, Part III – Dr. Brian Forsgren
- 11:00-11:45 Panel Discussion: Drs. Folger, Hawk, and Forsgren

Saturday, July 22, 2000 (Afternoon) *Ethics Program*

- 1:00-1:45 Ethical Issues in a Large Corporate Veterinary Practice, Part I – Dr. Robert Featherstone
- 1:45-2:30 Ethical Issues in a Large Corporate Veterinary Practice, Part II – Dr. Ed Stephenson
- 3:15-4:45 Panel Discussion: Drs. Featherstone and Stephenson

Speakers for the Ethics Program

Dr. Don Draper

Iowa State University
Ames, IA

Dr. Bob Featherstone

PetsChoice, Inc.
Bellevue, WA

Dr. William Folger

Memorial Cat Hospital
Houston, TX

Dr. Brian W. Forsgren

Bay Village, Ohio

Dr. Larry M. Hawk, President

American Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Animals
New York, NY

Dr. Ronald M. McLaughlin,

Medical Center, University of Missouri
Columbia, MO

*Ethics Program:
Saturday
July 22, 2000
AVMA Annual
Meeting
Salt Lake City, UT
Salt Palace,
Room 250D*