



President's Message Fall 2006

Dear SVME Members:

It's been an interesting journey becoming part of the Executive Board of the Society For Veterinary Medical Ethics. I've been an observer on the listserve for many years but not part of very many conversations. I was recruited for this position after I did a point-counterpoint on Animal Welfare Issues for an AAHA program. At that program we debated on issues such as convenience euthanasia, declawing cats, the responsibility of reporting animal abuse and we even hit the tired subject of ear crops.

At the time I was tempted to run some of these issues by the listserve but the conversations seemed more philosophical - probably due the academic background of this group. As a companion animal practitioner in Vermont, I encourage more private practitioners to contribute to the listserve discussions. Thanks to Gary Block we have had some recent practical dilemmas posted such as misplaced dogs and conflicts arising between the Specialist and the GP. These topics may be more engaging to the private practitioner and get more participation going in our close SVME membership. This is not to say we shouldn't continue important discussions such as Guardianship and the future of veterinary medicine which I have heard some very thoughtful contributions. It adds to my background as these same topics are discussed at a national level in my role as a Board member for the American Animal Hospital Association.

As a profession we have day-to-day ethical issues to address and I feel it's important for all veterinarians to challenge themselves to a high level of integrity in practice not just those few who are involved in organized veterinary medicine. The SVME exists as a forum for the profession to debate all levels of ethical issues. In this way it can help form a future that defines what is the "right thing" to do. As an organization to have more impact on our profession we need to encourage more membership. So spread the word- its a great deal.

http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org_SVME.

As an AAHA Student Advocate I have had the opportunity to interact with a number of students. Many of them have a strong interest in doing what's "right". Compared to a decade ago the issues seem to be evol-

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Message</i>	1-2
<i>2006 Shomer Award</i>	2
<i>SVME Officers</i>	3
<i>Animal Ethics Website</i>	3
<i>Student Essay Contest</i>	3
<i>Treasurer's Report</i>	4
<i>In the News</i>	5
<i>That Fish You Caught Was in Pain!</i>	6-7
<i>2007 Meeting Agenda</i>	7

President's Message continued...

"I feel it's important for all veterinarians to challenge themselves to a high level of integrity in practice"

ing. Now students' concerns range from not doing surgery on live animals to guardianship to not eating meat just to name a few. This is our future and it would be great to get more student participation on our Listserve. Please encourage any students you know to become members. Our essay contest will hopefully continue to pull in interest from them as well.

Other than my appeal to all of you to increase our membership, I welcome any questions or thoughts you may have. Feel free to contact me directly at annavet@adelphia.net

Anna E Worth VMD

2006 Shomer Award

The Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics (SVME) is pleased to announce this year's Shomer Award winner, Professor Bernard Rollin. The Shomer Award is given annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of veterinary medical ethics. Selection criteria for the award include leadership, scholarship, good character and a history of inspiring students and/or members of the veterinary profession.

Dr. Rollin's unanimous nomination by the SVME reflects the enormous contribution he has made in his written work as well as his teaching efforts involving students, veterinarians and many other allied animal health, agricultural and animal protection organizations.

Dr. Rollin is a University Distinguished Professor, Professor of Philosophy, Professor of Animal Sciences and University Bioethicist at Colorado State University where he is recognized as teaching the first course ever in veterinary medical ethics and as the principal architect of the landmark 1985 Animal Welfare Act.

His work and teaching have resulted in him receiving numerous awards and honors including the Brownlee Award for outstanding achievement in animal welfare and the Henry Spira Award in Animal Welfare from Johns Hopkins University for alternatives to animal testing.

Professor Rollin was presented a personalized plaque and a \$1000 cash prize at the recent SVME plenary session held during the AVMA Annual Convention.

Individuals interested in information about the Shomer award can contact Dr. Gary Block at (401) 886-6787 or visit the SVME website www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org_svme/

Professor Rollin receiving the Shomer Award from Dr. Barbara Horney



New Board Members Elected

The Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics (SVME) is pleased to announce its new Board Members elected at the recent AVMA Convention:

- ◆ **President:** Anna E. Worth DVM
- ◆ **President Elect:** Carol Morgan DVM
- ◆ **Immediate Past President:** Barbara Horney DVM, PhD
- ◆ **Secretary:** Gary Block DVM, MS, DACVIM
- ◆ **Treasurer:** John S. Wright DVM
- ◆ **Historian:** Diane Levitan DVM, DACVIM
- ◆ **Parliamentarian:** Francois Martin: MA, PhD

Student Essay Contest



This year's student essay contest subject will be: Should veterinarians be required to report known or suspected cases of animal abuse? What are the ethical, practical and legal issues surrounding this question?

A \$500 prize will be awarded to the winning essay and the winning essay will be published in the SVME Newsletter. Selected essays of significant merit may also be posted on the SVME website. Essays can be e-mailed to Gary Block at gbylc@aol.com; Deadline for submissions is March 30, 2007.

Animal Ethics Dilemma-Website

A free, easy to use, internet-based, interactive learning tool that presents a number of animal related ethical dilemmas involving animal use in science, toxicology, intensive agriculture, zoos, hunting and euthanasia is available at www.aedilemma.net

"The questions here are designed to throw light on your existing views on animal ethics – to reveal the beliefs you currently (perhaps unconsciously) hold. When you have completed this test the cases presented on the main menu will adapt and change in response to your answers". Your answers will also generate a profile that classifies your moral orientation (contractarian, utilitarian, relational, deontological, respect for nature) when it comes to animal related ethical issues.

Treasurer's Report October 23, 2006

As of October 23, 2006 the SVME checking account balance was \$1,950.45. The savings account balance was \$11,414.98. We also hold a \$10,000.00 Certificate of Deposit. Membership dues notices were sent in September. Thank you to all that responded to the first dues notice. Responding early saves the time, and money required to send a reminder notice.

Below is the treasurer's report similar to what was presented July 15, 2006 at the SVME annual meeting in conjunction with the AVMA meeting in Hawaii. You may note that expenses exceeded income during the past year. This is largely due to initiation of the Robert R. Shomer Award which includes a \$1,000.00 gift, and the SVME Student Essay Contest Award that includes a \$500.00 gift. Granting these awards results in a short-term decline in our bank balance. However, that decline is returned in name recognition, and heightened awareness of the importance of ethics in the veterinary profession. We hope an increase in membership will follow. **Please help to recruit new members!** If you need brochures, or other membership information please contact Dr. John Wright at: wright008@umn.edu.

Condensed Treasurer's Report From SVME Annual Business Meeting July15, 2006 (not audited)

July 9, 2006; Savings account balance	= \$ 11,393.39
Checking account balance	= \$ 2,331.38
Certificate of Deposit	= \$ 10,000.00 (933.12)*
July 2, 2006 balance	= \$ 23,724.27
July 17, 2005 balance	= \$ 24,659.66
Net change in total balance FY05 - FY06	= (\$ 935.39)

SVME Income and Expense Summary Fiscal 2005 - 2006

SVME Income Summary Fiscal 2005-2006

Dues income = \$ 1,340.00

SVME Expense Summary Fiscal 2005- 2006 (July 17, 2005 – July 15, 2006)

Newsletter Copy & Postage	Misc. Office & Postage	Tax Consult	SAVMA Meeting***	Student Essay Contest	Robert R. Shomer Award	Total Expenditures Fiscal 05-06
684.86	88.49	50.00	273.77	500.00	1,103.40	2,700.52

*** Expenses shared with American Association of Human Animal Bond Veterinarians for booth, banners, and poster design, and printing at Student AVMA meeting in Minneapolis, MN

Respectfully submitted, John S. Wright DVM



In The News

Animal Use Statement from AVMA

The AVMA House of Delegates (HOD) approved a resolution affirming the responsible use of animals for human purposes as being consistent with the Veterinarian's Oath. These principles were articulated as follows:

- ◆ The protection of animal health
- ◆ The relief of animal suffering
- ◆ The conservation of animal resources
- ◆ The promotion of public health, and
- ◆ The advancement of medical knowledge

A separate resolution that asked the AVMA to "declare animal welfare to be a higher priority than economic considerations" was disapproved by the HOD and the Executive Board.

American Horse Slaughter Protection Act

A controversial bill (H.R. 503) to ban the annual slaughter of approximately 90,000 horses in the United States, primarily for export as horsemeat, was passed by large majority in the House of Representatives. The companion bill is not expected to be taken up by the Senate making passage this year unlikely. The AVMA and over 100 other allied horse, animal health and agricultural organizations testified against the bill.

Cancer Risks and Animal Testing

A new study, "America's War on Carcinogens: Reassessing the Use of Animal Tests to Predict Human Cancer Risk", by Dr. George Gray, executive director of the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, criticizes the federal government's over-reliance on animal testing to determine cancer risks for humans and stresses that this results in a diversion of attention and funding for more real cancer risks. The study can be obtained from the American Council on Science and Health (www.ACSH.org)

Value of Animal Pets in Court Again

An Oregon judge ruled that a jury may consider punitive damages and intentional infliction of emotional distress awards of \$1.325 million in a case where a man was convicted of animal cruelty for repeatedly running over the plaintiff's dog while they attempted to extricate the dog from under his pickup truck. The judge threw out part of the original lawsuit that asked to recover damages for loss of companionship citing that this was not a "viable theory under Oregon law" and that it was "up to the courts to or the state legislature to establish that concept."

State Animal Cruelty Laws Evaluated

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) has ranked every state in the nation with regard to the "general comprehensiveness, and relative strength of their respective animal protection laws". Oregon, California, Illinois, Maine, and Michigan top the list whereas Idaho, Utah, Kentucky, North Dakota, and Hawaii make up the bottom of the ranking. Seven states still do not consider animal cruelty a felony offense.

That Fish You Caught Was in Pain

Dr. Victoria Braithwaite

The following was first published in the LA Times and is being reprinted here with the permission of the author. Dr Braithwaite obtained her BA and D.Phil. at Oxford University. She is a Senior Lecturer at Edinburgh University at the Institute of Evolutionary Biology in Scotland.

Every year, sportsmen around the world drag millions of fish to shore on barbed hooks. It's something people have always done, and with little enough conscience. Fish are... well, fish. They're not dogs, who yelp when you accidentally step on their feet. Fish don't cry or look sad or respond in a particularly recognizable way. So we feel free to treat them in a way that we would not treat mammals or even birds.

But is there really any biological justification for exempting fish from the standards nowadays accorded to so-called higher animals? Do we really know whether fish feel pain or whether they suffer-or whether, if fact, our gut sense that they are dumb, unfeeling animals is accurate?

Determining whether any type of animal really suffers is difficult. A good starting place might be to consider how people feel pain. When a sharp object pierces the human body, specialized nerve endings called nociceptors alert us to the damage. Incredibly, no one ever seems to be asked before whether fish have nociceptors around their mouths. My colleagues and I in Edinburgh, Scotland, recently looked in trout and found that they do. If you look at thin sections of the trigeminal nerve, the main nerve for the face for all vertebrates, fish have the same types of nociceptors that we do-A-delta and C fibers. So they do have the necessary sensory wiring to detect pain.

And the wiring works. We stimulated the nociceptors by injecting diluted vinegar or bee venom just under the skin of trout. If you've ever felt the nip of vinegar on an open cut or the sting of a bee, you will recognize these feelings as painful. Well, fish find these naturally irritating chemicals unpleasant too. Their gills beat faster, and they rub the affected area on the walls of their tank, lose interest in food and have problems making decisions.

When I have a headache, I reach for the aspirin. What happens if we give the fish painkillers after injecting the noxious substances? Remarkably, they begin to behave normally again. So their adverse behavior is induced by the experience of pain. But just because fish are affected by pain, does that mean they actually *feel* it? To answer that we need to probe deeper into their brains (and our own) to understand what it means to feel pain. To determine what fish go through mentally when they experience painful stimuli, we also need to determine whether they have a capacity to feel emotion and to suffer.

This is a much harder problem. It goes to the heart of one of the biggest unresolved issues in biology: Do nonhuman animals have emotions and feelings? Are nonhuman animals conscious?

Scientists and philosophers have long debated consciousness and what it is and whether it is exclusively human. There are multiple definitions and frankly, we haven't really come to grips with what it means to be conscious ourselves. Are we conscious because we are capable of attributing mental states to others, or perhaps because we have a qualitative awareness of feelings whether they are positive or negative? And if we can't define our own consciousness, can we expect to detect it in fish? Perhaps not, but we can look for behaviors and abilities that we believe contribute to human consciousness-for example, complex cognitive abilities and specialized brain regions that process emotion and memory.

It turns out that the stereotype of fish as slow, dim-witted creatures is wrong; many fish are remarkably clever. For example, they can learn geometrical relationships and landmarks-and then use these to generate a mental map to plan escape routes if a predator shows up.

And their brains are not as different as ours as we once thought. Although less anatomically complex than our own brain, the function of two of their forebrain areas is very similar to the mammalian amygdala and hippocampus-areas associated with emotion, learning and memory. If these regions are damaged in fish, their learning and emotional capabilities are impaired; they can no longer find their way through mazes, and they lose their sense of fear.

...continued on next page

2007 Meeting Agenda

The SVME has organized an interesting and provocative plenary session scheduled to take place on July 15th, 2007 at the AVMA's 2007 Convention in Washington, DC. The morning session will revolve around "ethical conflicts between general practitioners and specialists" whereas the afternoon session will attempt to shed light on the issue of over treatment of animals and the concept of ethical decision-making at times of veterinarian-owner conflict.

Speakers from general practice, academia, and referral practice will provide a forum for constructive discussion and debate on these issues.

Session	Time	Speaker	Title/Topic
1	8:00-8:45	Gary Block DVM, MS DACVIM	Ethical Conflicts Between General Practitioners & Specialists: Case studies
2	8:45-9:30	Gary Block DVM, MS DACVIM, audience	Ethical Conflicts Between General Practitioners & Specialists: Discussion and Debate
Break			
3	10:00-10:45	Anna Worth DVM	Ethical Conflicts Between General Practitioners & Specialists: Protocols and Guidelines for Resolution
4	10:45-11:00	Worth, Block F. McMillan DVM, DACVIM audience	Ethical Conflicts Between General Practitioners & Specialists: Panel Discussion
Lunch			
5	1:00-1:45	Franklin McMillan DVM, DACVIM	Ethical Conundrums Arising from Over Treatment of Animals with Poor Prognoses
6	1:45-2:30	James Serpell, PhD	Cases of Ethical Consternation at a Veterinary Referral Hospital
Break			
7	3:00-3:45	Alice Villabos DVM	Preventing Over Treatment at a Veterinary Cancer Referral Clinic
8	3:45-4:30	Villabos, McMillan, Serpell, Block, audience	Ethical Decision Making at Times of Owner-Veterinarian Conflict: Panel Discussion
9			Dr. Robert Shomer Award presentation

Fish ... continued from previous page

None of this tells us that fish are *conscious*, but it does demonstrate them to be cognitively competent. They are more than simple automata.

So do we have to change the way we treat fish? Some still argue that fish brains are so less developed than those of birds and mammals that it isn't possible for fish to suffer. In my view, that case is not proven.

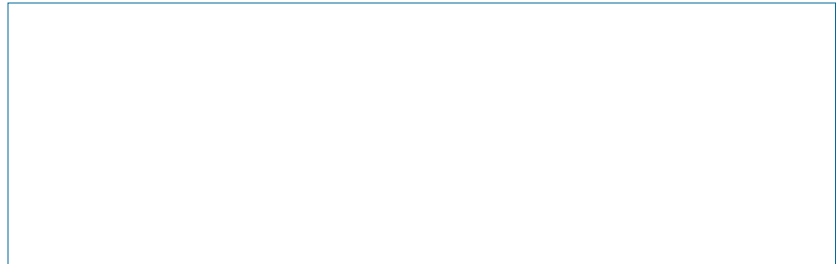
Moreover, we actually have as much evidence that fish can suffer as we do that chickens can. I think, therefore, that we should adopt a precautionary ethical approach and assume that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, fish suffer.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we necessarily much change our behavior. One could reasonably adopt a utilitarian approach and argue that the benefits of sportfishing, both financial and recreational, may outweigh the ethical costs of the likely suffering of fish.

But I do find it curious that it has taken us so long even to bother to ask whether fish feel pain. Perhaps no one really wanted to know. Perhaps it opens a can worms-so to speak-and begs the question of where do we draw the line. Crustacean welfare? Slug welfare? And if fish, why not birds? Is there a biological basis for drawing a line?



C/o Sylvie Cloutier
Dept. of VCAPP
205 Wegner Hall
Washington State University
Pullman, WA 99164-6520



SVME Mission Statement

The SVME was founded over 10 years ago to promote discussion and debate about ethical issues arising in and relevant to veterinary medicine. 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 contact Dr. Gary Block (401) 886-6787 or visit the SVME website

www.vetmed.wsu.edu/org_svme/

to learn more about the organization.

