

Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics

Newsletter



VETERINARY PEDIATRICS

APR 29 1997

Volume 1 Number 3 August 1995

Message from the President

I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to all the members who attended the recent meeting of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics in Pittsburgh at the Annual Meeting of the American Veterinary Medical Association. I also extend thanks to those members who expressed an interest in attending, but could not because of other personal and professional reasons. I appreciate your continuing interest in our Society.

Next year, we are looking forward to an expanded meeting and session for an entire day at the AVMA Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. This meeting is scheduled for July 20-24, 1996. The Society meeting is presently planned for Tuesday July 23, 1996, and you should mark this date on your calendars at this time. I encourage all of you to plan your activities at the next AVMA meeting to be available to attend this session.

The most important need of our Society is to increase the membership list. We need to contact individuals interested in veterinary ethics in all areas of employment, including veterinary practice, organized veterinary medicine, academia, government service, and other areas where veterinary medicine is at work. Ethical issues involving our profession are best identified and solved by those individuals who have a direct impact on the stewardship and welfare of all animals. Each of us in the Society must reach out and notify all those who work around us about the Society and encourage active participation and membership. The inclusion of a membership form with this newsletter should provide each member with an opportunity to try to solicit other individuals to join our Society. I welcome suggestions from anyone who has ideas on how we can expand the membership base and encourage dialogue on ethical issues in our profession.

Albert S. Dorn, D.V.M., President
Jerrold Tannenbaum, M.A., J.D., President-Elect
Robert R. Shomer, V.M.D., Past-President
Kathy Potter, D.V.M., Secretary
Robert C. Speth, Ph.D., Treasurer
James Harris D.V.M., Parliamentarian
Richard Fink, D.V.M., Historian

If anyone has ideas on topics for discussion at the Annual Meeting, next year, or ideas for a program, please contact me as soon as possible. Another alternative would be to contact Jerry Tannenbaum as he will be helping to develop the next program.

I appreciate your support and confidence as I assume the office of President of this Society, and I look forward to working with everyone to promote a better understanding of ethical and value issues in our profession.

Albert R. Dorn, D.V.M.

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President, Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics

Message from the President-Elect

The 1996 meeting of the Society will feature our third plenary session. As President-Elect, I have the responsibility of organizing a full day program of speakers. I have some ideas about particular topics and speakers, but we want to involve as many members as possible in our sessions, both as participants and speakers. Therefore, if any of you plan to attend the AVMA convention next July, and have an idea for a talk, either by yourself, or someone else, please contact me at your earliest convenience, by email at: 693.6323@mcimail.com, or c/o Center for Animals and Public Policy, Tufts Univ. School of Veterinary Medicine, 200 Westboro Rd. North Grafton, MA 01536.

Jerrold Tannenbaum

Past President's Message

There is a tendency for past officers to dwell upon their accomplishments while in office, but since mine were largely the result of a supportive and active Board of Trustees, I shall refrain and only repeat my appreciation for their services.

I prefer to reemphasize one of the objectives for forming this Society, that of providing a forum for persuasive discussion via our newsletter. In the form of "letters to the editor" it should be possible for members to voice thoughts and opinions about Moral, Ethical, and yes, Legal issues that need to be addressed. Those issues that provoke sufficient response can become the subject of "in depth" deliberation during the annual meeting.

For those in academia, many issues such as biogenetics, patents on procedures and surgical techniques, use of animals in teaching students, treatment of livestock immediately prior to slaughter, use of certain hormones, additives or medications, cosmetic surgery, to name but a very few, are already being addressed. There are many more issues involving commercial or professional practices which often overlap, indeed even conflict, which calls for and deserves rational objective (very difficult!) discussion.

To start the anticipated flood of letters, allow me to pose a current concern: "Should professional individuals hold a PATENT on a surgical or medical technique or procedure?"

I promise to reveal my present personal stance even if you succeed in changing it! Direct FAX or letter to me (201) 825-1763, or Bob Speth (509) 335-4650.

Best wishes,
Robert R. Shomer, VMD.
10 Indian Field Ct.
Mahwah, NJ 07430

**SOCIETY FOR VETERINARY
MEDICAL ETHICS****SECOND ANNUAL MEETING:**

July 11, 1995

Minutes

The Second Annual Meeting of the Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA on July 11, 1995. The meeting commenced at 9:15 AM. About 25 people were in attendance. Featured speakers were Dr. Greg Scoggins of Richmond, VA, speaking on "Ethics of Species Specialization in Equine Practice" and Dr. Richard Fink of Hacienda Hills, CA, speaking on "Convenience Euthanasia". Dr Scoggins described several ethical challenges that confront equine practitioners, such as determination of soundness of an animal for an insurance exam or for sale by a client, legality of drug treatments of performance animals, conflicting interests of the patient and the client, and questions of when to refer a case and to whom.

Dr. Fink's presentation included examples of situations when veterinarians are called upon to euthanize or to make decisions whether or not to euthanize animals. The examples were provocative and most would agree that they fit into the gray area where justifications for and against euthanasia could be made. At times the debate came down to the contrasting positions of acknowledging harsh reality versus an idealistic viewpoint. Noteworthy in the discussion was the questioning of the definition of the word euthanasia (even the Medical Dictionaries are ambiguous on the definition: Translated most simply from Greek it means good death, but it has gained the connotation that it is a mercy killing done to prevent suffering from the pain of an incurable disease.) Use of the term "put to sleep" was also challenged. Because of the lively and sustained discussion of both presentations, little time was left for Dr. Al Dorn's presentation on "Ethics of Discipline Specialization in a Multi-Person Veterinary Hospital". After a brief introduction of the topic by Dr. Dorn, the group agreed that additional time at the next meeting should be devoted to the topic.

The business meeting was called to order by President Bob Shomer at approximately 12:15 PM. No minutes were available from the previous meeting. Treasurer Bob Speth presented a brief

MINUTES CONTINUED

financial report, but no other reports were given. A discussion related to dues and deadlines for dues payment resulted in a decision that dues are payable as of July 1, 1995 and will cover the period from July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996. Members who have paid dues to the society since January 1 will be considered paid up for 1995/1996. Treasurer Bob Speth distributed a list of all individuals who had expressed interest in the Society with a note as to payments received. He will send one more newsletter to the entire list with a note that only dues paying members will continue to receive newsletters in the future.

President Elect Dorn proposed that he would solicit membership from participants in the AVMA leadership conference. It was generally agreed that although many people had expressed interest in the Society few were actively participating in meetings. Historian Jerry Tannenbaum encouraged all present to solicit membership and foster participation in Society functions.

The slate of officers put forward and elected for next year were: Al Dorn, President; Jerry Tannenbaum, President Elect; Jim Harris, Parliamentarian; Kathy Potter, Secretary; Richard Fink, Historian; Bob Speth, Treasurer. Bob Speth also agreed to continue to edit the newsletter. Bob Shomer will automatically become Past-President.

In new business, a suggestion was made and there was general agreement that next year's meeting of the Society be a full day. Since the meeting will again be held in concert with the AVMA meeting in Louisville, KY, July 20 - 24, 1996, there was some discussion on what day of the week to have the meeting. The consensus of the members present was to continue to have the meeting on a Tuesday. There was also discussion as to whether the meeting should be held in the conference center. There was concern that this posed a problem for those members who for various reasons did not register for the AVMA convention. Al Dorn mentioned that as an allied society, the room fee for Society meetings was covered by the AVMA. It was decided that the Society would not meet in the conference center, but will endeavor to have its meeting in a location that was in close proximity to the conference center. Al Dorn and Jerry Tannenbaum as President and President-Elect will organize next year's program.

Bob Speth presented two candidates for membership: Melinda Cumming, D.V.M. and Bernadette Dunham, D.V.M., Ph.D. The candidates were unanimously approved as new members.

Another issue of discussion was the role that the Society might play in guiding policies related to ethical issues that arise within the Veterinary profession. The general consensus was that the Society could evolve towards making recommendations to the AVMA Judicial Council. As summarized by the new President-elect Jerry Tannenbaum, another purpose of the Society may be "... to encourage and stimulate discussion of the code [of ethics of the AVMA]."

In closing Bob Shomer expressed some disappointment in the lack of discourse among members on ethical issues. Al Dorn and Jerry Tannenbaum assured him the Society is very young and that increased participation will come with time.

The meeting was adjourned at approx. 12:45 PM. Respectfully submitted, Kathy Potter, Secretary, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-7040

Treasurer's Report

As of July 31, 1995 the assets of the Society were \$791.52, but we have a few outstanding bills. Dues payments have continued to drift in slowly, but I'm preparing myself for the onslaught of dues checks following this Newsletter. Again, we sincerely thank those who have sent checks to support the Society.

As noted in the **Minutes of the Annual Meeting**, (see above) dues payments for the 1995 - 1996 year are now due. To remain on our mailing list and to continue to receive this exciting Newsletter we must receive your dues payment of \$20.00. Checks should be payable to: "Society for Vet. Medical Ethics" and sent to: **Dr. Robert Speth, VCAPP, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State Univ., Pullman, WA 99164-6520**

Our two newest members are Bernadette Dunham, DVM, Ph.D., from the AVMA's Government Relations Division in Washington DC office and Melinda Cumming, DVM, from Washington State University. Bernadette writes that

she attended Dr. Barbara Orlan's course "Ethical Issues on Animal Use in Research and Education" in July 1994, and got many good ideas for teaching encouraging seminars/courses covering various ethical issues. She also says: "Jerry Tannenbaum's 2nd edition of "Veterinary Ethics" should be an active addition to the libraries of every veterinarian!"

Melinda is a graduate student in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University and is interested in animal behavior. She has recently published a formulary of Psychotropic Drugs used in Veterinary Medicine entitled, *The Psychotropic Formulary*, the second edition of which is now available from the SCAVMA bookstore, Washington State Univ, Pullman, WA 99164-7010. telephone (509) 335-8359.

Rollin's Book on Genetic Engineering Now Available

Professor Bernard Rollin of Colorado State University, a charter member of our Society, and a prominent figure in the areas of animal and veterinary ethics, has recently published his new book on genetic engineering. titled *The Frankenstein Syndrome: Ethical and Social Issues in the Genetic Engineering of Animals*, it is now available in bookstores. It can also be ordered from Cambridge University Press, 40 W. 20th Street, New York, NY 10011. The book lists for \$49.95 (hard cover) and \$18.95 in paperback.

The book is divided into three parts: "There are certain things humans were not meant to do.", "Rampaging Monsters", and "The plight of the creature". A review of this important book will be forthcoming in a future issue of this Newsletter. However, all members of our Society and indeed anyone interested in this area of growing concern need to obtain this book. It is excellent and will become a focus of much study and discussion.

- J. Tannenbaum .

Comments From Our Fellow Members

§ Hal Jenkins from Tempe, AZ who missed the most recent meeting because he was in Krgistan (at least that's the way I read it) which is a former part of the

Soviet Union, writes: "As a Director of the American Association of Veterinary State Boards, I have been campaigning to have that organization take an active part in promoting the teaching of Ethics in our professional colleges. The AAVSB needs to have a presentation regarding this topic at either our meeting at the W.V.V.C. in February or that the AVMA meeting next July." He would appreciate any suggestions (602) 839-2824.

§ C.S.F. Williams writes "Could you publicize the [dues] issue more & send idiot-proof messages ?!!"
Editor's reply: *I'll try, the only problem is, I have one of those idiot-proof computers and it shuts down every time I try to use it!* ♣•∂-∫φ∇∑≠ξ♥↔∅Σ

§ Bob Speth found an interesting quote in an interview of Craig Venter a leading researcher of the human genome in **The Scientist** July 24, 1995 issue. "I think the worst thing for science and society is to leave the, quote, ethical issues up to the professional ethicist, because while there are some very good ones that have their feet on the ground and things based in, reality, a lot of discussions that I've heard at ethical meetings are totally hypothetical situations that have nothing to do with facts or reality or even probability." He goes on to say that he thinks that those who do the work should be some of the people most involved in the ethical discussions. Does this sound like us ?

Editor's Note: Now that so many of you have sent me your FAX numbers, for which I thank you, I'm throwing a curve ball at you. Because this edition of the Newsletter is 4 pages rather than the previous 2 page editions, it is less costly to use the U.S. mail than to FAX it to you. In addition, I can add separate dues notices and thank you's to the membership who have already paid their dues. I still need FAX numbers in case future editions go back to the 2 page format, so please include that information with your dues checks. I will also try to get out a list of dues paying members with the next Newsletter so we all know who we are.

Also included with the Newsletter is a membership form. Please photocopy it and circulate to those whom you think would be interested in joining the Society.