



Kansas City Veterinarians Seeing Spike in *Leptospira spp* Impacting Dogs

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

A veterinarian at Pet Resource Center of Kansas City, Dr. Cynthia Goldston says she has seen two dogs with leptospirosis in the last few months. One was a puppy that came in with yellow gums and eyes. Bloodwork confirmed liver and kidney failure. The second was an older dog. Both pets were euthanized.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that is usually spread through water contaminated with urine from infected wildlife such as rodents and raccoons. Dogs can also get it from soil. The disease is zoonotic and is transmitted to humans through exposure to contaminated urine.

Leptospirosis has many manifestations of clinical disease in dogs and affects any age, breed, or sex. Signalment and lifestyle are not the basis for exclusion in the diagnosis of leptospirosis. The most common presentation is acute kidney injury presenting with lethargy, anorexia, vomiting, abdominal pain and polyuria, anuria, or oliguria. Acute liver disease can also be a presentation either alone or in conjunction with acute kidney injury. Clinical signs associated with liver disease include icterus, vomiting, anorexia, and lethargy. Other clinical signs associated with leptospirosis include muscle pain, stiffness, weakness, reluctance to move or trembling. Occasionally bleeding disorders can be associated with leptospirosis presenting with petechiae, epistaxis, melena, and hematemesis.

Treatment includes supportive care and antimicrobial therapy. Doxycycline is the antibiotic of choice to eliminate infection. Prevention is primarily through commercial vaccines. There are several vaccines covering multiple serovars including Canicola, Icterohaemorrhagiae, Crippotyphosa, and Pomona in the US. There is some evidence that vaccination with one serovar is cross-protective against other serovars. It is recommended these vaccines be administered yearly.

People working around infected dogs or dogs suspected of infection should take cautions to avoid exposure of skin or mucous membranes to urine or blood. Gloves should be worn when cleaning up urine and handlers should wash their hands immediately after handling the infected dog.

Federal Bill Aims to Amend IRS Code to Allow Health Savings Accounts for Vet Expenses

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

The People and Animals Well-being (PAW) Act, a bipartisan bill to expand the use of tax advantaged health care spending accounts to include veterinary care, has been introduced in Congress. The bill would amend Internal Revenue Code Section 213(d) increasing animal health eligibility including programs such as Health Savings Accounts (HSA) and Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA).

The bill was introduced by Congresswomen Deborah Ross (D-NC) and Claudia Tenney (R-NY). The PAW Act seeks to allow pet owners up to \$1000 in veterinary care expenses or purchase and animal health insurance plan through their HSA or FSA. Also included in this bill is limitless veterinary care expenses for service animals assisting individuals with mental and physical disabilities.

The bill is supported by MetLife pet insurance, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI). MetLife's head of pet insurance, Brian Jorgensen, stated that "this bill is a critical step towards promoting the health and well-being of pets by helping pet parents access the care their pets need while protecting their financial wellness."

The current status of the PAW Act (H.R. 9508) is Introduced to the House Ways and Means Committee.



First Case of Human Bird Flu Not Directly Linked to Sick Animals is Found in Missouri

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

A person in Missouri has been diagnosed with bird flu, but has had no known contact with animals. This the first case of the virus in a human in the U.S. this year that is not linked to farm work. There have been 14 human cases of the virus since this spring, but all the patients except the one previously mentioned, had been linked to sick poultry or cows.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the patient from Missouri was hospitalized and has since recovered and been discharged. It does not appear that any of the patient's close contacts had been affected by the virus. The CDC reports that at least 196 cattle herds and 56 poultry

flocks have been affected across the U.S. Human cases have been reported in Texas, Michigan, and Colorado.

There are no known bird flu outbreaks in Missouri cattle, but there have been flocks of backyard and commercial poultry affected by the virus in the state. Bird flu has also been detected in wild birds in Missouri in previous years.

The CDC still maintains a low risk assessment of bird flu for the general public and recommends people avoid having contact with sick or dead animals – wild or domesticated. The CDC also advises against drinking raw milk, however, adds that pasteurized milk is safe to drink as the process of pasteurization kills the virus.

Colorado Ballot Measure Calls for Non-veterinarians to Diagnose, Do Surgery

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Colorado Proposition #129 aims to create a new midlevel practitioner position in veterinary medicine. The proposition refers to the new position as a veterinary professional associate (VPA) who would overlap the duties of technicians and veterinarians. Under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian, the VPA would be allowed to diagnose and recommend treatment plans and perform surgery.

All Pets Deserve Vet Care, one of the sponsors of the proposition, provided 200,000 signatures. To qualify for the ballot, an initiative needs 124, 238 signatures. The initiative was certified by the Colorado Secretary of State and the initiative will appear on the ballot on November 5.

The president of the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (VMA), Dr. Kelly Walsh, wrote an op-ed in opposition to the initiative stating the proposition promotes dangerous risk by allowing an associate to practice veterinary medicine with limited training, most of which is online. She wrote, “Surgical procedures, even routine surgeries, are highly complex and require extensive veterinary training and expertise. Allowing inadequately prepared individuals to perform such procedures fundamentally undermines veterinary care and places animal lives in jeopardy.”

Also in opposition to the ballot initiative are the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP), American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV), American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), American Veterinary Dental College (AVDC), American College of Veterinary Surgeons (ACVS), Independent Veterinary Practitioners Association (IVPA), and Veterinary Management Groups (VMG). The Colorado VMA and others throughout the state of Colorado are opposed as well. According to a survey distributed by the Colorado VMA, three out of four veterinarians in Colorado oppose the measure.

Supporters of the initiative include the Animal Welfare Association of Colorado, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the Virtual Veterinary Care Association.

The president of the AVMA, Sandra Faeh expressed, “This ballot measure attempting to create a ‘veterinary professional associate’ would be disastrous for pets and other animals and endangers public health, considering that 75% of emerging infectious diseases in humans originate with animals. The proposed training for this position is completely inadequate and will lead to missed or delayed diagnoses, ineffective treatment and repeat visits, all of which lead to more suffering for the animal and increased cost for the client.”

The ballot initiative calls for the Colorado State Board of Veterinary Medicine (CSBVM) to oversee the processes of examination and qualification, issue registrations and set fees for the VPA position. If the measure is passed, major regulatory and legislative changes would have to occur on the federal level for the position to be fully effective. Currently the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) only allows veterinarians to prescribe and dispense medications. This regulation is applicable in all 50 states and U.S. territories as well as federal level positions. The VPA position requires a master’s degree, but there is no accredited national education, test, or regulatory structure for this position. Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences is developing a degree program for a Master’s of Veterinary Clinical Care (MSB VCC) in anticipation of these requirements.

Colorado Rep. McCormick cautions that there is no program in place nor in the near future to ensure the individual VPA has competency to perform surgery or prescribe medications. She also pointed that since the VPA operates under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian, any actions performed or caused by the VPA would fall under the liability of the supervising veterinarian.

According to Tracey Gray-Walker, AVMA Trust CEO, among all Professional Liability Insurance Trust (AVMA PLIT) claims,

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over 10% pertained to spays and neuters. The number rises to about 20% when restricted to companion animal claims. These claims represent about 50% of the top five small animal surgical claims.

As pointed out by the American College of Veterinary Surgeons (ACVS), all surgical procedures have inherent risk that can lead to complications. They stated that only a licensed veterinarian, or a board-certified veterinary surgeon in many cases, has the education and training to safely perform surgeries and be able to address any complications and issues that may arise.

While supporters state the proposition would help more animals get veterinary care by addressing the workforce shortage, no evidence has shown that the creation of a VPA would address this issue. Meanwhile, veterinary visits are trending downward. Both veterinarians and veterinary technicians are generally opposed to the creation of the new position and advocate for more efficient utilization of current licensed veterinary technicians. A bill has already been passed by Colorado's legislature earlier this year to expand the scope of practice for veterinary technicians. Colorado House Bill 24-1047 allows veterinary technicians to assist in surgeries, and perform some dental procedures under direct supervision of a veterinarian. This law is set to go into effect January 2026.

New Veterinary School Updates - New Jersey (Rowan University), South Carolina (Clemson University)

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

The final beam is in place to finish the frame of New Jersey's first veterinary school on Rowan University's West Campus. When finished, the building will be the Shreiber School of Veterinary Medicine. The first students will attend class there in less than a year.

The founding Dean, Dr Matthew Edson, and the 30 people on staff are creating an innovative curriculum involving hands-on experience for students from day one. The school is set to open in August 2025. Between now and then, the school plans to hire 100 people including clinicians that will care for patients at the 24-hour teaching hospital.

The school is named in honor of J&J Snack Food Chairman Gerry Shreiber, who is donating \$30 million in scholarships for the school. Officials hope this will help retain students within the state who will go on to practice in New Jersey once they have graduated.

Meanwhile, Clemson University is on track with South Carolina's first veterinary college. The founding dean, Steven Marks, comes to Clemson from North Carolina State University where he spent a long tenure as associate dean and director of veterinary medical services. As a land-grant institution, Marks says that Clemson has many of the necessary components for a thriving veterinary school.

South Carolina currently is in dire need of more

veterinarians. One-third of the state's 46 counties have five or fewer veterinarians. Another half have 10 or fewer veterinarians in their service area. The state needs both companion animal and livestock vets. Because of the great need for veterinarians in the state's livestock industry, the General Assembly budgeted more than \$100 million in funding for the construction of the veterinary college.

The curriculum covers two broad categories: companion animals and agricultural animals. However, the curriculum also addresses animals that fall somewhere in between. This refers to traditional livestock animals that are now being kept as pets, including chickens, goats, and cows. The program aims to help future veterinarians understand how this distinction affects the medical care they deliver.

Hands-on training will be in more of an apprenticeship style than the traditional teaching hospital. Students will learn from veterinarians performing various roles within the state. The school's first class will aim for 80 students with 60 being from South Carolina and 20 from out of state. The projected start is just under 2 years from now, but students cannot be recruited until the school receives accreditation from the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education. Marks says they expect to receive their Letter of Reasonable Assurance some time in 2025.

NOVEMBER CE EVENT

Speakers: Catherine Peace, DMV, DACVIM (SAIM) &
Dr. Emily Murray

Topics: Diagnostic and Therapeutic Approach to
Proteinuria & TBA

Date: November 7th,, 2024

Time: Dinner/Registration: 6:30 | Presentation: 7:00

CE: 2 Hours

Location: Grand Street (Lenexa)

Fee: No fee to attend this event. Current membership dues cover all CE..

Sponsor: IDEXX

Classifieds

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October 15, 2024

Animal Clinic of the Woodlands & NKC Animal Clinic are seeking a full-time veterinarian to join our growing team. We are sister hospitals - small animal only- one hospital located in North Kansas City, Missouri (NKC Animal Clinic) and one hospital located in Gladstone, Missouri (Animal Clinic of the Woodlands). NKC was built brand new in 2021 and Animal Clinic of the Woodlands will have a brand new 10,000 square foot hospital in the summer of 2025. We have in-house Idexx lab equipment, a brand-new surgical suite, ultrasound, hydrotherapy, digital radiography, digital dental radiographs, laser and much more. The schedule is 4 days per week 8am-(5 or 6pm) and rotating Saturdays (8am-noon). We highly value a work/life balance as the owner is a working mother of 3 young children. We offer a competitive salary, sign on bonus, health insurance stipend, 401K with match, CE allowance, personal/vacation time, dues, liability coverage, discounted care, mentorship and so much more. Email questions or resumes to Dr. Lillie Fitzpatrick at LLRMRB@gmail.com

September 10, 2024

Animal Clinic of the Woodlands is looking for a full time veterinary technician. We are a busy and growing practice located in Gladstone Missouri dedicated to providing top tier care to our clients. We utilize our technicians and encourage you to continue to grow and learn!

Your responsibilities will include anesthesia monitoring, diagnostic imaging, full laboratory capabilities, catheter placement, blood draws, technician appointments, client education, and assisting the doctor during appointments and surgeries.

The right fit must have good communication, great customer service, and proficient phone/computer skills, along with having a great attitude, a love of animals!

Please submit resumes and applications in person. 2770 NE 60th St, Gladstone, MO 64119 or email to animalclinicofthewoodlands@gmail.com.