



Reduced Foot Traffic in Veterinary Clinics Leads to Decreased Revenue

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Although the pet population has continued to increase through 2024, many pet owners have decreased spending in response to rising inflation and lowered budgets. This led to a decrease in overall patient visits and product sales in small animal clinics. AVMA's chief economist, Katelynn McCullock and Vetsource's vice president of data services, Sheri Gilmartin, presented at the 2024 American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Veterinary Business and Economic Forum this past October. They presented findings from a data analysis of 6000 practices across the US from August 2023 and 2024. The findings showed a decrease in patient visits by 2.3% from the year prior with an increase in overall revenue of 3.9%. Revenue increases were mostly attributed to price increase. Because of the decline in overall patient visit, the increase in prices had a lesser impact on overall revenue than previous years.

Decreased visits are largely attributable to a decrease in active patients by 1.9%. Canine patients had the biggest drop, while feline patients are up 0.8%. Although sick visits are fairly stable, there has been a decline in well visits, new puppy and kitten visits and new clients. Clients are also tending to extend the time between visits by an average of 48%, which also has an impact on overall revenue.

McCullock predicts a recession is coming in 2025 if it is not already here. Economists predict the health of an economy based on the behavior of the yield curve. An upward sloping curve indicates future economic growth whereas an inverted yield curve reflects lower growth in the future. The current yield curve has been in an inverted pattern since 2022. In addition, consumer debt is increasing while spending is slowing.

As part of the Economic Forum, the AVMA created an Insight to Action Guide as a resource for small animal practices that can be viewed here: [3-2-1 Insight-to-Action Guide](#)

Walmart Expands Pet Care Services with New Veterinary Centers, Telehealth Service

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

Walmart has the third highest online sales of pet supplies in the U.S. behind Chewy and PetSmart e-commerce sites respectively. With veterinary services comprising the largest spending category after consumables, Walmart aims to position itself to take advantage. In 2018, Walmart had partnered with PetIQ with plans to establish over 100 in-store clinics. However, by 2023 many of the PetIQ locations have since shuttered their doors.

Despite that, the company announce that it will expand its pet care services to open five new Pet Services Centers along with veterinary telehealth and prescription drug delivery. The new Pet Services Centers will be in Georgia and Arizona. These Centers offer routine veterinary care including vaccinations, wellness, minor medical procedures and grooming. They hope to expand the model to other communities.

Additionally, Walmart has partnered with Pawp, an online telehealth platform, to provide free 24/7 telehealth to Walmart+ members with unlimited visits with Pawp's veterinary professionals. Walmart hopes to be able to provide customers with a convenient one-stop shop for all of their pet-care needs.



USDA APHIS Proposing New User Fees for Veterinary Services

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

The United States Department of Agriculture Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) is proposing to update veterinary service user fees for the first time since 2012. This update will cover the cost of providing current services, facilities and information technology as well as allowing for the hiring and training of more personnel. The agency does not get appropriated funding for the services it provides including inspection services for imports and exports of animals and animal products, quarantine and certification services, and diagnostics for the eradication and control of livestock and poultry diseases across the country.

An example of the need for increased fees is

the increased complexity of health certificates for exports. Health certificates have evolved from one-page, standardized documents with minimal information to multipage documents with country and species-specific information that can vary widely from country to country. This requires more specialization by individuals to learn the requirements as well as more time spent reviewing and certifying each certificate.

A full list of proposed fees and processes for determining fees can be found in the November 8, 2025 Federal Register. Public comments closed December 09. Once comments are reviewed, the final ruling will be published in the Federal Register.

Heartworm Incidence Climb Despite Preventative Efforts

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

The American Heartworm Society conducts a survey of heartworm positive cases in dogs every 3 years. The last survey, published in 2023, shows the numbers from the end of 2022. Over the last 20 years, the numbers of heartworm positive dogs has continued to climb and the incidence of reported heartworm positive cases is increasing in states with traditionally low numbers. According to AHS data, the number of heartworm positive dogs increased from around 800,000 in 2001 to over 1.2 million in 2022.

The spread of heartworm to traditionally non-endemic areas can be explained by several factors, including lack of owner compliance in giving prevention, transport of positive dogs out of state, climate change contributing to weather conditions conducive to increased mosquito populations and expansion of territories of wild canids. States known for having the highest incidence of heartworm disease include Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas and the Carolinas. Although the rates of heartworm are historically low, Kansas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Washington and Oregon saw unexpected increases in their numbers this last survey.

Dr. Tanja McKay, a professor at Arkansas State University, published study findings showing that mosquitoes are more attracted to infected canids than non-infected. The changes that occur once a dog is infected contribute to the attraction of mosquitoes that feed on the infected dogs and subsequently spread the infection to another dog. Once a dog is infected with heartworm, the pulmonary tissue already starts to become necrotic long before the dog tests positive. The necrosis of tissue causes the dog to exhale VOCs (volatile organic compounds) that attract the mosquitoes. This also occurs within populations of wild canids such as wolves and coyotes.

Disease density and spread are influenced by weather conditions such as extreme drought and hurricanes. Seasonality can also affect populations of mosquitoes, with decreased incidence of heartworm positive cases in cooler months. However, areas that artificially warm such as congested urban areas, can contribute to increases in mosquito populations in cooler months. Further contributing to the spread to other states is the practice of shipping stray pets to other states for adoption. Many of these pets are tested for heartworm at the time of spay or neuter and are negative, but follow-up is lost in the process of transport and rehoming. These pets that are actually heartworm positive, then move into a new community and serve as reservoirs for mosquitoes to spread infection.

The veterinary community can contribute to combating the spread of heartworm disease by explaining the ease by which the disease is spread and the role of preventatives in protecting pets from heartworm infection. Reasons pet owners do not routinely purchase and give prevention involve several factors including, forgetfulness, cost, fear of side effects and lack of knowledge about the disease process and its transmission within the community. Veterinarians can help by ensuring clients leave the clinic with a prescription or dose(s) of prevention in hand. In addition, monthly reminders to give prevention may be helpful for clients that tend to forget to give the medication routinely. Other helpful reminders include yearly reminders for testing as well as monthly, twice yearly or yearly reminders to buy prevention based on the clients' purchase habits.

More information on treatment and prevention as well as marketing and education resources can be found on the American Heartworm Society website at www.heartwormsociety.org.



AVMF Helps Veterinary Clinics in N.C. Recover from Catastrophic Floods

BY: SAMANTHA BARTLETT, DVM

In late September, Hurricane Helene swept through the southeast triggering heavy flooding and landslides in western North Carolina. The catastrophe killed a hundred people and thousands of animals resulting in more than \$53 billion in damages and recovery efforts.

The landslides washed away entire mountainsides and towns wiping out power, internet and running water along the way. Many areas were inaccessible with no bridges or roads left requiring recovery teams to helicopter in and hike supplies on foot or by donkey. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared 39 counties in the state as federal disaster areas. These 39 counties house more than 40% of the state's population. Within this disaster area, more than 300 veterinary clinics are affected with several listed as closed until further notice and many more other operating without water, electricity or internet.

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation

(AVMF), the charitable arm of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), provides grants to help veterinarians help animal welfare through grants, disaster relief, education and research programs. To date, the AVMF has donated \$20,000 to the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association (NCVMA) and \$10,000 each to Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee and Greater Good Charities. Additionally, the AVMF awarded nearly \$7500 in disaster grants for animal medical care in disaster affected communities of North Carolina as well as \$6800 in necessities for veterinary professionals.

In addition to funds provided by the AVMF and FEMA, the NCVMA is also providing grant funding as well as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and the AVMA. Individuals in the veterinary profession from across the country have also pooled together on social media to provide veterinary supplies and assistance to clinics in the disaster areas.

KCVMA 2025 Membership Renewal Reminder

An organization is only as strong as its members, and KCVMA is most certainly going strong! As 2024 ends, we thank you, our members, for giving us the opportunity to support and celebrate Kansas City-area veterinarians through continuing education and networking opportunities, and by advocating on behalf of our members and our profession.

Renew your membership by January 1st so you don't miss out on anything KCVMA has to offer. Please know we will continue to offer quality CE during these times. If in person meetings are not possible, virtual monthly meetings will continue to occur. To renew, go to <http://members.kcvma.com> and follow the instructions provided. Life members must complete this process to maintain their complimentary membership. If you would prefer to renew via email please feel free to contact Brian Ellis (bellis@kcvma.com)

JANUARY CE EVENT

Speakers: Dr. Elise Kelly

Topics: Reach for Zen: New Relief for Dogs with Atopic Dermatitis

Date: Tuesday, Jan. 21st

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

CE: 1 Hour

Location: Lidia's (Kansas City)

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

Sponsor: Elanco

RABIES TITER TESTING

The KCVMA will be offering rabies titer testing for current members at the 2025 Midwest Veterinary Collaboration Conference. This event will be held on Sunday, February 2, 2025, at the Overland Park Convention Center.

The cost of testing will be \$60 for MVMA/KCVMA members and \$65 for KCVMA/non-MVMA members. Be sure to renew your membership now and sign up for the testing. Availability is limited.

We will send you an appointment time for your blood draw closer to the date of the event. The Midwest Veterinary Collaboration Conference is a free CE event hosted by Mission and Overland Park Veterinary Emergency & Specialty. Sign up for the event here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/midwest-veterinary-collaboration-conference-tickets-872619527497?aff=oddtcreator>

Sign up for testing here: <https://kcvma.wildapricot.org/event-5970455>

Classifieds

Send your classified ads to: Wanda Geis, PO Box 12468, Shawnee Mission, KS 66282-2468, or email them to classifieds@kcvma.com. Classified ads will be run at the sole discretion of the editor and may be edited for content.

November 12, 2024

After nearly 40 years as one of the Kansas City area's highest-rated veterinary practices, Dr. Wayne Hunthausen is making the shift to focus entirely on his behavior practice and is looking to pass the baton to a new practice owner.

Westwood Animal Hospital is located in the heart of the KC Metro, just west of the Country Club Plaza. We have an excellent clientele and a dedicated core staff.

Our practice centers on a commitment to high-quality medical services and warm, personalized care for each and every one of our patients and clients. We want to pass the reins to a veterinarian who has the same values.

Please contact Dr. Hunthausen at 913-677-3290 or 913-449-3191.