

JOURNAL



March/April
2024

VETERINARY NURSING IN ACTION

SPECIAL FOCUS

Euthanasia

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On the cover:

Euthanasia is an emotionally charged, but common, part of veterinary practice. This month we explore how we can work with owners in deciding to euthanize, as well as ways to improve both soft and hard skills in this practice area.

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NAVTA Board Sets Priorities for 2024 and Beyond

For two cold, gray days in January, the NAVTA Board of Directors huddled in a windowless room in a Chicago hotel to chart a transformative course for the association and the field of veterinary technology. With a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and advancement, NAVTA's strategic plan sets ambitious goals to elevate the profession and meet the evolving needs of the association's members.

The strategic plan outlines key initiatives across five strategic pillars:

- Advocacy** – NAVTA is dedicated to advocating for the recognition and advancement of veterinary technicians as essential members of the veterinary healthcare team. Through targeted advocacy efforts and partnerships with regulatory bodies, NAVTA aims to secure greater recognition and support for the profession.
- Awareness** – The public and the veterinary community will recognize and respect the vital role of the veterinary nursing professional.



Participating in the strategic planning session were (L to R): Phil Russo, Executive Director; Jamie Rauscher, President; Lauren Camia, Association Manager; Ryan Frazier, Director; Ashli Selke, Past President; Mariel Hendricks, Director; Melissa Evans, Director; Heather Prendergast, Director; and Harold Davis, Treasurer. Beckie Mossor, President-Elect, participated via Zoom.

NAVTA

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:

Jamie Rauscher, LVT

President Elect:

Beckie Mossor, RVT

Treasurer:

Harold Davis, Jr., RVT, VTS (ECC) (Anesth/Analgesia)

Directors:

Melissa Evans, LVT, CVT, VTS (ECC)

Ryan Frazier, LVT, BS Marketing

Mariel Hendricks, BS, RVT

Heather Prendergast, RVT, CVPM, SPHR

Immediate Past President:

Ashli Selke, RVT, CVT

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Approved Veterinary Assistants Program Committee:

Dennis Lopez, M.Ed., LVT

Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties:

Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)

Continuing Education Committee:

Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)

DEIB Committee:

Christina Loftin, MS, LVT

District Representative Committee:

Christen Puckett-Smith, RVT

Government Relations Committee

Sam Gelling, RVT and Mandy Zachgo, LVT

Membership Committee:

Scott Steele, MS, LVT, VTS (Dentistry)

Students Chapters of NAVTA Committee:

Tammy Ege, MS, CVT

Tuition for Technicians Task Force

Paige Allen, MS, RVT

Veterinary Nurse Initiative Committee

Kathy Koar, MEd, CVT

Ken Yagi, MS, RVT, VTS (ECC), VTS (SAIM)

Executive Director:

Phillip E. Russo, CAE

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THE NAVTA JOURNAL

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3. **Professional Development** - Recognizing the importance of continuous learning and skill development, NAVTA is committed to enhancing educational opportunities and promoting high standards of training for veterinary technicians. NAVTA will support and encourage members to expand their knowledge and expertise in veterinary nursing. 
4. **Membership** - NAVTA will be a growing community of members who find participation relevant and valuable. 
5. **Infrastructure** - NAVTA will be structured, governed and aligned to maximize financial, staff and volunteer resources to meet our goals. 

Some of the key initiatives from the plan are:

1. **Creating a membership base** that is well informed and empowered to advocate for itself.
2. **Supporting the growth** and engagement of student members
3. **Refining and strengthening the member value proposition**, thus retaining members and attracting new ones
4. **Increasing collaboration** with allied organizations, including state Veterinary Technician associations and specialty academies.
5. **Developing new CE content** and means of content delivery
NAVTA will announce details of the plan in separate news releases.

NAVTA WELCOMES 2024 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

NAVTA's 2024 Board of Directors officially began their terms at the close of the Annual General Membership Meeting on January 30, 2024. The leadership team is:

- Jamie Rauscher, LVT, *President*
- Beckie Mossor, RVT, *President-Elect*
- Ashli Selke, RVT, CVT, *Past President*
- Harold Davis, RVT, VTS (ECC) (Anes/Analgesia), *Treasurer*
- Heather Prendergast, RVT, CVPM, SPHR, *Director*
- Ryan Frazier, LVT, *Director*
- Melissa Evans, LVT, CVT, VTS (ECC), *Director*

Learn more about the Officers & Directors at
navta.net/leadership/

NAVTA thanks Mariel Hendricks for her service on the Board since January 2022.

CHANGE IS COMING!

This issue of the *NAVTA Journal* marks the final issue in which the Board Update, State Association, and Specialty Academy columns will appear. Beginning next month, those columns will be published in NAVTA's e-newsletter, to allow more timely delivery of these important updates. Starting with the next issue of the *NAVTA Journal*, expect to see a "From the Editor" column in this space, as well as more CE-related content, including case studies from members just like you!

If you'd like to submit an article or case study for consideration, please see the Editorial Guidelines published here:
navta.net/editorial-guidelines



NAVTA NEWS

2024 COMMITTEE LEADERS

NAVTA Announces 2024 Committee Leaders

NAVTA's committees are the lifeblood of the association, handling important functions and overseeing vital association programs. The leaders of those committees are some of the most dedicated NAVTA members and NAVTA thanks them for their volunteer spirit.

Here's a list of NAVTA's committees, a brief description of each group's primary purpose, and the names of the group's leaders.

COMMITTEE	SUMMARY OF PURPOSE	CHAIR	VICE/CO-CHAIR
Approved Veterinary Assistants	Assesses curriculum from schools that teach students how to be Veterinary Assistants; determines if the schools earn designation as NAVTA-approved. Develops the national exam for anyone trying to earn the credential "Approved Veterinary Assistant"	Dennis Lopez, M.Ed., LVT	Helen DeWitt
Continuing Education	Develops tracks of CE for industry events. Develops NAVTA-specific webinars. Reviews/approves proposed webinars from outside entities.	Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)	Open
Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties	Assesses Veterinary Technician academies that certify Veterinary Technicians to become a Specialist in one of 16 different specialty areas; determines if the academies earn designation as NAVTA-approved.	Vicky Ograin, MBA, RVT, VTS (Nutrition)	Amanda Shelby
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging	Ensures NAVTA's policies, procedures, programs are of the highest levels in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recently conducted a DEI survey of members.	Christina Loftin, MS, LVT	Deb Bascombe
District Representative	NAVTA has divided the US into 11 districts to create a pipeline of communication between the board and state Veterinary Technician associations. This committee brings together the 11 individuals elected as "District Representatives" to share information.	Christen Puckett-Smith, RVT	Anna Santos
Editorial Advisory	Responsible for the editorial content of the bi-monthly magazine, The NAVTA Journal.	Mary Berg, BS, RVT, LATG, VTS (Dentistry)—Chair	Open
Government Relations	A "boots on the ground" group that helps state Veterinary Technician associations draft and/or improve legislation that would create favorable situations for Veterinary Technicians (e.g. title protection).	Sam Geiling, RVT	Mandy Zachgo, LVT
Membership	Assesses membership benefits and suggests new benefits. Reviews membership recruitment and retention plans.	Scott Steele, MS, LVT, VTS (Dentistry)	Open
Student Chapters of NAVTA	NAVTA has "student chapters" at numerous veterinary technology schools across the US. The chapters are led by NAVTA members employed at the schools. This committee brings together those chapter leaders (called "Advisors") to share information and ideas.	Tammy Ege, MS, CVT	Open
Veterinary Nurse Initiative	This group is primarily responsible for helping NAVTA draft position statements on hot-button issues, such as title protection of the title "Veterinary Technician," the use of the title "Veterinary Nurse," increased Veterinary Technician utilization, and the new proposed "Mid-Level Practitioner" position,	Kathy Koar, MEd, CVT	Ken Yagi, MS, RVT, VTS (ECC), VTS (SAIM)
Tuition for Technicians Task Force	Determines the rules and guidelines for the annual "Tuition for Technicians" scholarship program. Assesses each applicant and determines who receives the 20 \$2,500 scholarships.	Paige Allen, MS, RVT	Not applicable

RAUSCHER RECAPS 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS, INCLUDING BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

"I hope you've heard all of this before."

NAVTA President Jamie Rauscher, LVT, recapped the association's many accomplishments during the Annual General Membership Meeting held via Zoom in January. Here is a summary of Jamie's remarks.

NAVTA has done some really great things over the past year and, frankly, I hope this recap will actually be familiar to you. Because if it is familiar news to you, that means we did a better job during the year of telling you what we were doing. And, if you were here last year, you know that it was a focus of mine to increase the communication between the NAVTA Board and you, the NAVTA Members.

As I said last year, there is so much NAVTA is doing, so many good things, but unless we tell you about it, you're in the dark. And that can lead to incorrect conclusions, assumptions, and the feeling that NAVTA is trying to hide things. And nothing could be further from the truth.

So, if you've heard all of this already, then that is great because it means we achieved our goal of better communication! And if some of this is news to you, then we will continue to work to improve our communications with you.

To guide us through our time together this evening, we will be using the lenses of NAVTA's Strategic Plan, which is used by the NAVTA Board to guide our activities and actions in fulfilling our mission of advancing our profession.

Infrastructure

First up is Infrastructure, which is the pillar that ensures NAVTA has the basic building blocks and foundation in place to make sure the association operates efficiently and effectively. This includes things like

consistent policies, procedures, committees and board structure, allowing NAVTA to have a firm foundation to build upon achieving our mission.

At last year's Annual Business Meeting, we announced the creation of a Nominations and Elections Task Force to review our bylaws, policies, processes, and communication around the nomination and election of candidates for Officers and Directors for the NAVTA Executive Board. From February to May, this Task Force met weekly and achieved all the objectives set before them. The changes to our bylaws were overwhelmingly approved by our members, and the updated policies, processes, and communication were implemented by the 2023 Nominating Committee which resulted in a smooth election process. I would like to once again personally thank the members of the Task Force, Mandy Zachgo, Scott Steele, Peg Wheeler, Renae White, and Ashli Selke for all of their hard work in helping to make the nominations and election process more transparent and participatory by the NAVTA Membership.

One of the measurements of our prior year's success within the Infrastructure pillar is the prudent management of our financial resources. I am happy to report that under the guidance of our Treasurer, Harold Davis, NAVTA's financials outperformed our budgeted expectations according to our unaudited year-end financial reports. NAVTA purposefully always budgets very conservatively and realistically, meaning we expect higher expenses and lower revenues over the course of the year. Because of our sensible approach to our financials, we were able to achieve a positive net gain of nearly \$78,000, which is about 25% more than the net gain we had budgeted for in 2023.

NAVTA will utilize this surplus to create strategic investments which will allow us to continue to invest in more resources and create new programs to benefit you, our members.

Awareness

The second pillar of our strategic plan focuses on Awareness, which means building awareness of the Veterinary Technician profession both within the veterinary community and with the public. Over the past year, NAVTA had several outstanding accomplishments in this area.

In January we presented a webinar on the 2022 Title Protection Report to all the state veterinary medical association executives—the executive directors and CEOs of the state VMAs and affiliated partners. We were able to educate this audience on the importance of title protection to our profession and provide a set of recommendations that state veterinary medical and technician associations can implement to help bring about title protection within their states.

We were able to educate this audience on the importance of title protection to our profession and provide a set of recommendations that state veterinary medical and technician associations can implement to help bring about title protection within their states.

Also last January we released the 2022 Demographic Survey results and held a presentation on the findings at WVC. The results showed that while pay and education in our profession have increased slightly, burnout and high student debt continue to be major issues for our field.

In October we partnered with NAVC on the second round of the public awareness campaign that began in 2022 with a survey of U.S. pet owners. The campaign, “Trust me. I’m a Vet Tech” was picked up by over 950 outlets, with an audience reach of over 260.7 million. There is a great toolkit available at navc.com/trust-me-im-a-vet-tech/. You can utilize the materials in this toolkit to share in your own social networks, clients, and your practice to help educate and build awareness around the importance of our profession.

October additionally saw the release of the 2023 AAHA Technician Utilization Guidelines, in which several NAVTA members served on the Guidelines Task Force. We are grateful for the work of this task force and for AAHA’s dedication to developing these Guidelines to help create awareness of how to advance the utilization of credentialed veterinary technicians within veterinary practices.

October was also an important one of celebration for us as we recognized the 30th Anniversary of National Veterinary Technician Week! Last year we gave away more than \$3,000 in Amazon Gift Cards and hosted a variety of events, including a Virtual Career Fair, CE Webinar, and a limited time “\$30 for 30 Years” membership discount for all current members who renewed during the week of October 15.

Advocacy

2023 was one of the busiest years in NAVTA’s history in our strategic pillar of Advocacy. Since forming our Government Relations Committee in 2022, we have helped lead efforts to support state associations in over 25 states to update

2023 was one of the busiest years in NAVTA’s history in our strategic pillar of Advocacy.

or change legislation and/or regulations to advance and/or protect veterinary technicians, particularly in the states of Arkansas, California, Alaska, Missouri, Massachusetts, Kentucky, and Washington.

Much of our Advocacy work includes partnering, collaborating, and allying with stakeholder groups in the profession, such as AVMA, AAVSB, AAVMC, AAHA, VHMA, AAFP, AVTE, RVTTTC, and others.

In the summer of 2023 we issued a Call to Action to AVMA in response their remarks at the House of Delegates meeting about their opposition to the expansion of scope of practice for non-veterinarians. We believe in professional and courteous dialogue with our collaborating partners and this is why we invited AVMA leaders to our September Town Hall meeting to discuss their response to our call to action.

Membership

In the strategic pillar of Membership, NAVTA continues to see positive signs of growth in our membership base. NAVTA ended 2023 with over 9,000 individual members. Our membership consists of approximately 6,000 Credentialed Veterinary Technicians, 2,400 Veterinary Technician students, and nearly 650 Associate Members (which are those members who do not qualify as a Credentialed Veterinary Technician in the U.S.).

A nice portion of our growth last year is attributable to AVMA’s provision to NAVTA of \$7,500 to cover the dues of 125 new members, those who had never been NAVTA members. When we announced this program on December 5, we anticipated leaving it open for at least two weeks. Well, we had to close the program after

just five days because we were inundated with applications—964 in all! Thank you, AVMA, for the fantastic show of support and for helping us build our prospect and membership lists!

In Fall 2023 we launched a new Joint Membership initiative with the American Association of Feline Practitioners. For a small additional fee, NAVTA Members are able to sign up for an annual membership in both NAVTA and AAFP, allowing participants in this program to take advantage of member-only programs and discounts from both organizations. If you are interested in learning more about this program, please visit our website, at navta.net/aafp-joint-membership.

Professional Development

Lastly in our strategic pillar of Professional Development, in addition to our program of more than a dozen CE webinars—all of which were offered free to NAVTA members—and the Leadership Summit and Leadership Symposium (both of which were also free). None of our programs would be possible without the support of our sponsors, and we express our deep gratitude to them for their support of our CE sessions.

In February 2023, we released the Infection Prevention Leader Certificate Program, a four-module program with 5 RACE approved CE hours for free for all veterinary technicians. We’ve had over 2300 participants go through the program since we launched, which includes over 700 veterinary technicians. We would like to thank Virox for their generous sponsorship of this program and the task force volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring this program to fruition.

In Fall 2023, the Government Relations Committee hosted a Legislative Strategies Workshop designed to help teach veterinary technicians on how to formulate a strategy to work with state veterinary medical associations, state veterinary boards,

and legislators on how to help change regulations and/or legislation. Over the course of six weeks, participants worked in peer groups to discuss how to make progress on title protection and scope of practice within their states.

Additionally, throughout 2023 NAVTA participated in a variety of events with CE sessions at VMX, WVC, AVMA, the first HiVE conference in Austin, TX, and eight CE sessions at the New York Vet Show.

We accomplished quite a lot over the course of 2023, using our strategic pillars to guide us.

Conclusion

As you can see, we accomplished quite a lot over the course of 2023, using our strategic pillars to guide us. The exciting thing about Strategic Plans is that every few years the NAVTA Board meets to examine the plan and see if it needs refinement or fine-tuning to steer us as we march forward into the future. In Fall 2023 we conducted surveys and focus groups to hear from you, our members, on how NAVTA can continue to serve you and work to advance our profession. Earlier this month, the Board met in Chicago to review the findings from our members and work together to refine our plans, and I am very excited for where NAVTA will be headed next! I invite you to stay tuned to our communications over the next several months as we will be sharing with you our new roadmap for success in 2024 and beyond.



Alabama Veterinary Technician Association (AVTA)

2024-25 AVTA Officers

Our new officers began their term Jan 1. Our officers serve a two year term. They are as follows:

- Hayley Pritchard, BS, AAS, LVT | *President*
- Elena Graves, BS, LVT | *President Elect*
- Maureen Donohue, LVT | *Vice President*
- Kelly Berkley, LVT, CCFP | *Secretary*
- Bethany Trucks, BS, LVT | *Treasurer*

2023 Member Awards

Congratulations to the outstanding award recipients honored during our 2023 Annual Conference (pictured right)!

- Our 2023 Alabama Veterinary Technician of the Year is Kristi Healy, LVT.
- Our 2023 Outstanding AVTA Member award winner is Madison Foreman.
- 2024-25 AVTA President Hayley Pritchard presented outgoing 2022-23 AVTA President Cindy Pearson with the Presidential Gavel plaque in recognition for her service to AVTA and as a symbol of the Presidential term transition.

2024 Annual Conference

Our 2024 annual continuing education conference is scheduled for October 19th, 2024 and will be held in Opelika, Alabama, hosted by Southern Union State Community College's Veterinary Technology Program on the Opelika campus.

More information about our association can be found at www.alvettech.org and we are on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

— Hayley Pritchard, BS, AAS, LVT



2022-23 AVTA President Cindy Pearson (left) presents the 2023 Alabama Veterinary Technician of the Year award to Kristi Healy, LVT (right)



2022-23 AVTA President Cindy Pearson (left) presents the 2023 Alabama Veterinary Technician of the Year award to Madison Foreman (right)



2024-25 AVTA President Hayley Pritchard (left) presents the Presidential Gavel plaque to 2022-23 AVTA President Cindy Pearson (right)

New Jersey Veterinary Technicians and Assistants (NJVTA)

The NAVTA Approved Veterinary Assistant Program at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey is now in its 14th year! They recently graduated 11 students on January 25, and will begin their spring semester shortly. This semester they have included rotations at a local shelter, the Tinton Falls Humane Society, to expose students to Shelter medicine in addition to their rotations at Red Bank Veterinary Hospital.

NAVTA began approving veterinary assistant programs in 2010, and Brookdale was the third program in the country to be approved. Janet McConnell, the Brookdale AVA program co-developer shared the following, "From the years I have been involved with this program, from teaching, to coaching, employing and staying in touch with these graduates over the years, I can attest that the role of the AVA, or Approved Veterinary Assistant, on the veterinary healthcare team cannot be understated. These entry level professionals have elevated the efficiency of technicians, elevated patient care, and many have furthered their career to become credentialed veterinary technicians- and a few DVM's as well!"

Congratulations to the Fall 2023 AVA Brookdale class (pictured below) on their graduation and welcome to an amazing profession!

We are also excited to announce that Bergen Community College's accredited veterinary technology program just started with a new class of 35 students who are first semester freshmen! We are excited for these freshmen at the start of their journey into the veterinary nursing profession and we wish them luck!

— Christina Giovannelli, CVT, VTS (SAIM)
New Jersey NAVTA State Representative



North Carolina Association of Veterinary Technicians (NCAVT)

Title Protection

As of December 1, 2023, North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board (NCVMB) implemented crucial updates to Title Protection for Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) in North Carolina. The updated Bill states "No person shall use the title 'registered veterinary technician' or the title 'veterinary technician,' the abbreviation 'R.V.T.,' or any other words, letters, or symbols, with the intent to represent that the person is authorized to act as a registered veterinary technician unless that person is licensed by or registered with the Board as a registered veterinary technician in accordance with this Article." This victory for RVT's in North Carolina not only upholds professional integrity, it ensures that individuals identifying as "veterinary technicians" or "RVTs" have met rigorous educational requirements and examination standards, resulting in a heightened standard of patient care. The newly refined bill, officially approved by the state legislature and signed by the governor, owes its success to Robin Lazaro's, RVT and North Carolina Veterinary Medical Board's unwavering support.



North Carolina Veterinary Technician Week

In October, 2023, NC Governor Roy Cooper designated October 15–21, 2023, as "North Carolina Veterinary Technician Week," commending its observance by all citizens (pictured right). In response to North Carolina State University's oversight in recognizing Veterinary Technician Week for employed RVTs, the NCAVT promptly supported affected technicians and conveyed to university leaders the significance of RVT recognition and role advocacy.



2023 Fall Continuing Education Conference

At the NCAVT 2023 Fall Continuing Education Conference in Dallas, NC, a notable number of technicians and technician students participated. Attendees explored diverse career opportunities and were informed about the updated Title Protection legislation, Governor Cooper's Vet Tech Week declaration, and engaged in healthy discussions about the implications of these changes. A heartfelt thank you to Melanie Skinner, Program Director at Gaston College, for hosting the NCAVT conference and generously providing a wealth of resources.

— Erin Clark, RVT and Maureen Susi, RVT
NCAVT Representatives



Rhode Island Veterinary Technician Association (RIVTA)

RIVTA Annual CE Conference

RIVTA will be holding their annual continuing education symposium on March 25 2024 at the New England Institute of Technology in East Greenwich, RI. Track topics include pain management, critical care & nursing, animal behavior, and dermatology. Additionally, there will be a catheter lab and cytology lab. Sign up in advance at www.RIVTA.org.

2023 RIVTA Veterinary Technician of the Year

RIVTA announced Tracy Olivieri, CVT as the RIVTA's 2023 Veterinary Technician of the Year. Tracy received multiple nominees from the community which showcased her unwavering 25+ years dedication to the animal community. Congratulations Tracy!

Congratulations to Cat Holly!

In December 2023, we said goodbye to our 20-year board president, Cat Holly. She was presented with the Cat Holly Meritorious Service Award, which is dedicated to passionate individuals in the Rhode Island veterinary technician community. Ms. Holly has guided the organization with unwavering support and commitment from the beginning, fought for justice during the most trying times, and has positioned the organization to continue progressing and elevating the veterinary technician profession into the future. Congratulations Cat!

— Ed Carlson, CVT, VTS (Nutrition)



Congratulations to RIVTA award recipients Tracy Olivieri and Cat Holly!



Pictured: 2023 RIVTA Veterinary Technician of the Year Tracy Olivieri, CVT (left) and 2023 Cat Holly Meritorious Service Award recipient Cat Holly (right)

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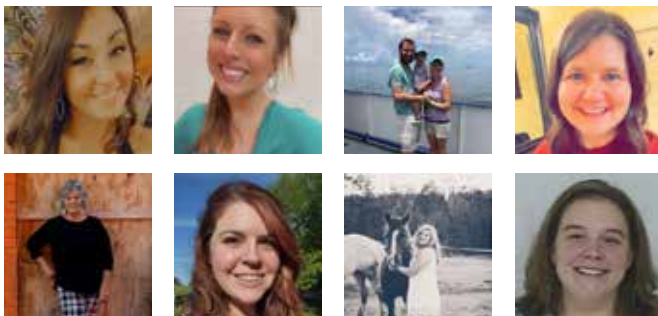
THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024
7:00PM EDT
**SPEAKER: Lisa Kluslow, DVM,
CVA, CCRT, VSMT**

REGISTER
TODAY!



NAVTA NEWS

STATE ASSOCIATION UPDATES



Clockwise from top left:

President: Tabatha Rowe, LVMT

Vice President: Rachel Lees LVMT, KPA CTP, VTS (Behavior)

TVTA Secretary: Kiana Bruce, LVMT

Treasurer: Alyssa Stair LVMT, VTS (Anesthesia/Analgesia)

NAVTA State Representative: Mary Hatfield, LVMT, AS, BS, M.Ed. LAT

East Tennessee Representative: Brittany Nelson, LVMT

Middle Tennessee Representative: Erika Hale, LVMT

West Tennessee Representative: Amanda Waldon, LVMT

Tennessee Veterinary Technician Association (TVTA)

TVTA Fall 2023 CE Conference

Last fall's TVTA continuing education conference held in Martin TN, was a great success. We saw attendance of around 60-70 technicians and students. There was a variety of speakers and a well-attended exhibit hall. Exhibitors included Blue Pearl, Nashville Specialty, VEG, Poison Control, and others. Attendees heard presentations of lectures on effective communication, clinical pathology, anesthesia, emergency and critical care, to name a few. We were excited to have University of Tennessee at Martin host us again in 2023 and hope that the partnership continues for 2024.

Elections for the positions of President and Treasurer were held in December 2023. Our new President is Tabatha Rowe. The position of Treasurer is held by Alyssa Stair as she was unopposed.

TVTA 2024 Board of Directors

• **President- Tabatha Rowe, LVMT**

My name is Tabatha Rowe. I am the current President of the Tennessee Veterinary Technician Association. I have a passion in all things animal related! I have worked in the veterinary field 10+ years and for the last fun-filled 5 years, I have been employed with Emory Animal Hospital in Powell, TN. I attended Lincoln Memorial University where I earned an Associate of Science degree in Veterinary Medical Technology. From there, I went on to earn my title as a Licensed Veterinary Medical Technician. I am lucky enough to have experience with both small animal and exotic animal medicine. I

have also recently become a Certified NAVC Pet Nutrition Coach and I hope to expand my knowledge in Canine Physical Therapy Rehabilitation and Pain Management. I have a husband, a daughter, 2 dogs 2 cats and 2 turtles. My hobbies include crafting and anything outdoors.

- **Vice President – Rachel Lees LVMT, KPA CTP, VTS (Behavior).** This is Rachel's first term as Vice President.
- **Secretary – Kiana Bruce, LVMT.** This is Kiana's first term as Secretary.
- **Treasurer – Alyssa Stair LVMT, VTS (Anesthesia/Analgesia),** This is Alyssa's fourth term as Treasurer.
- **NAVTA State Representative – Mary Hatfield, LVMT, AS, BS, M.Ed. LAT**
- **East Tennessee Representative – Brittany Nelson, LVMT**
- **Middle Tennessee Representative – Erika Hale, LVMT**
- **West Tennessee Representative – Amanda Waldon, LVMT**

Robin Carr, CVT appointed TVTA Webmaster

Robin Cobb, CVT is credentialed through the Florida Veterinary Technicians Association. She is also an active member of the Florida State Animal Response Coalition, certified in level 2 Sheltering Management in Disaster Response, and a First Responder with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture DART team, and a moderator for NOMV. Through her company, Cobb Care, Robin provides education for veterinary teams and animal owners in Pet Emergency Response and CPR, software management for veterinary

hospitals and claims administration for pet medical insurance.

Robin has a wide variety of experience with both large and small animal veterinarians in trauma/triage. and has worked in 24 hr veterinary emergency hospitals and general practices and has experience in anesthesia, surgical nursing and intensive care nursing.

Robin's husband of over 27 years is the Fire Chief in Tazewell, TN and a retired Captain with Hillsborough County Fire Rescue. Together they participate in community outreach events throughout the Southeastern states. They have 4 grown daughters, 4 grandchildren, and a chihuahua named Pickle.

Music City Veterinary Conference

The TVTA is planning to have a booth again this year at the Music City Veterinary Conference in Murfreesboro at the Embassy Suites on March 1-3, 2024. We will be hosting the annual Silent Auction. Come by our booth and see us. We will have a lot of TVTA merch.

Website and Membership Renewal

One last note: Our website (www.tnvtvta.org) is set up again under new management, but there is currently a glitch with the membership application. Please check our Facebook page for directions on renewing or becoming a member for the first time.

Respectfully submitted by

— Mary M. Hatfield, LVMT, AS, BS, LAT
NAVTA State Representative

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National Association of Veterinary
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The Technician's Role in Helping to Evaluate Quality of Life

Jamie Rauscher, LVT



Today I cried. I started my day with a text from one of my teammates that one of my all-time favorite clients had walked in for a euthanasia appointment. While I knew this was going to be coming, today was not the day I planned for this to happen. I rushed to get ready in record time as I was not due to go into the clinic for another hour. I walked into the clinic without my coffee (my much-needed fuel for the day), no makeup, and partially wet hair. I literally dumped my purse and backpack on the first person I saw. I then went in the exam room to sit with this client, a man I have known for over 20 years. He sat alone today, patiently waiting for what was to come. I walked into the room and sat on the bench, reaching for his hand to hold in mine. His wife had passed the previous year due to a battle with multiple illnesses. She had been diagnosed with dementia and Parkinson's. Over the last few years, we had watched her decline from the amazing, vibrant woman she once was, to a virtual stranger. As we sat together, we remembered when his dog, Scout (literally, the best sheltie ever), was young and his wife was healthy.

Time had robbed him and his family of the things that meant the most to him. At almost 12 years old, while still young in years, Scout had multiple issues and had been rapidly declining over the past few weeks. At his last appointment we had tearfully discussed Scout's quality of life and euthanasia if she did not improve. The DVM came in to do Scout's euthanasia, and as we always hoped, the procedure was peaceful. I took Scout out of the room with the promise to take good care of her.

Moments later I stepped back into the room to say goodbye to Mr. Bell and ended up sitting with him on the bench in the room for almost an hour. We held hands and cried together remembering Scout and the impact she had on her family. How good of a dog she was and the friend that he needed when he thought everything else was falling apart in his life. She was his constant companion through Covid and his wife's illnesses. We

talked about his wife and the stranger he had become to her. His loss as a husband and partner, not just as Scout's owner. He kissed me on the cheek and hugged me. Thanking me for all I had done for them over the years. I truly love that man and his family. After 28 years into the profession, not many euthanasia appointments make me cry anymore. This one hit me hard. He sent an email later in the day, thanking me for all I have done for them over the years. I cried again. As hard as it gets, as busy as our days are, this is why I do what I do each and every day.

Being able to connect with a client during a euthanasia is one of the most important parts of our jobs.

Being able to connect with a client during a euthanasia is one of the most important parts of our jobs. When it is time for an owner to make a decision about end-of-life care for their pet, I am always more than willing to help them with that process. Deciding to euthanize a pet is a hard decision that comes with many different emotions as well as experiences that are always going to be memorable to our clients.

The decision to euthanize a pet does not come easy, nor should it be taken lightly. Pets are family members to our clients and hold a special place in their lives. When a pet is injured and they are obviously suffering, the decision to euthanize is somewhat easier for a client. If their pet has something going on that is deadly and there is no other choice in the matter, the decision to euthanize their pet is in a way made for them. They must make this decision and there is nothing else that can be done for their pet. While not an easy decision to make, the deciding factors are more obvious and there may be a different peace of mind when making that decision.

When you have a pet that has a chronic

illness that cannot longer be treated or controlled, the decision to euthanize your pet comes down to its overall quality of life. While the deciding factors of your pet's quality of life may vary depending on your own beliefs, your veterinary staff can help with this and offer counseling services of a sort to help make the decision clearer and allow one to realize when the time is right.

There is much that we can do to ensure that the last months and years of life are full and happy. Even for patients with terminal disease, hospice care provides so much life at the end. A quality-of-life scale can help owners make decisions on how their companion is feeling and when hospice care is not enough, and it is time for humane euthanasia. The scale helps you take into account all aspects of discomfort to get a clear picture of how much a dog is enjoying life, what can be done to improve it, and when it is "time." There are several resources available to help with this decision, including the **Lap of Love Quality-of-Life-Scale** (www.lapoflove.com/quality-of-life-assessment).

Quality of Life Scale

We can evaluate a pet's quality of life in the following areas:

Pain

Adequate pain control is first and foremost on the scale. Pain control may include oral, transdermal and injectable medications, which will control part, or all of the pain associated with the dog's condition. Pain also includes the pet's ability to breathe properly. In some cases, oxygen therapy can be supplied at home by prescription through a medical supply house. Vomiting, seizures, or severe weakness are also included in this category.

Hunger

Many conditions result in the pet's inability to take in adequate nutrition. Heating food, hand feeding, or getting creative with ingredients will improve this, but not eating can be a very painful way to spend the end of life. When I have a patient in

hospice care nearing the end, I call it “ice cream time.” On the other side of this issue is that obesity will make most conditions worse, so if the patient is eating enough to maintain weight, be careful not to overfeed out of guilt or sadness.

Hydration

Many health conditions result in various degrees of dehydration, which can cause nausea and headaches. This can be easily addressed by infusing fluids under the pet’s skin, which most owners can be taught to give at home.

Hygiene

Dogs and cats who are used to being clean can get demoralized quickly when they smell of urine, feces, wounds or are covered in mats pulling on their skin. The odor associated with necrotic tumors can also cause social rejection by family members, which is very upsetting to a loyal companion. Antibiotics can help reduce this foul smell for some time. Keeping hair short or well brushed and clean is very important.

Happiness

Is your pet able to experience any joy or mental stimulation? Is your ailing companion willing to interact with the family and be responsive to things going on around him? Are they able to enjoy being on the bed or in your lap? Can the ailing pet enjoy the upbeat greetings and petting of loving family members? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored or afraid? Be sure the pet’s bed is close to the family’s activities and not isolated, so you can observe these traits and your companion can enjoy the strength from your proximity.

Mobility

Is your dog able to move around on its own or with help in order to satisfy its needs and desires? Does he feel like going out for his regular walk? Are there central nervous system problems, seizures, or stumbling? Can the pet be taken outdoors to eliminate alone or with assistance?



Making a decision about when it is best for life to end is one of the most difficult decisions any of us has to make. It is by far one of the more important things that pet owners must deal with and largely dread having to make a decision about.

Harnesses, slings, or carts can be helpful. Obesity is a big component of this. The nursing care of large immobile dogs is very demanding. A schedule of regularly changing sides and massage is critical to prevent skin sores and pneumonia.


Overall, we can average all the above categories into a simple 1-10 quality of life score and compare it to how we would enjoy life at each level. A quality-of-life score of 1 to 3 would be good, 4 to 7 would be entering the “poor” area. When you reach a score of 8 up to a 9 is when the difficult decision time comes. There will be good days and bad days, so you have to average them out (honestly) to help decide when it should be the end. A pet scored at a 10 in my practice is considered to be suffering. Everyone will rate their pets differently. Discussing with a client these guidelines will help them to make a more informed decision on what is best for

their pet. Taking the time to talk to clients to get as much information as possible on what is happening at home will allow better, more individualized advice to be given. More good days than bad should be the big deciding factor in making an end-of-life decision. There are going to be some days that are better than others. When there are more bad days than good, it has a huge impact on quality of life.

Making a decision about when it is best for life to end is one of the most difficult decisions any of us has to make. It is by far one of the more important things that pet owners must deal with and largely dread having to make a decision about. To have to make that decision for someone else comes with fear of making the wrong decision and stopping too early, but also the fear of going too far and causing unnecessary suffering. While we can give our opinion or input to a client, the decision is their own to make. All any of

us can do is to use the tools available to us to try to understand what our companion is experiencing and trust our hearts to know the right time.

We are often asked by clients if performing euthanasia is the hardest part of our jobs. Or they will say they cannot imagine what we do each day and mention how hard it must be to have to euthanize a patient. My answer is that the hardest part of my job is not being able to stop pain and suffering. Most times, the process of euthanasia is painless physically for our patients. We can help alleviate physical pain with medications as end of life comes near. Whether oral or injectable medications, for the most part, we have endless options to choose from. We can tailor these medications to help with anxiety, stress, and pain as the end of life is approaching as well as to make the actual euthanasia appointment smoother.

The emotional pain that our clients are having to deal with is a bigger burden for them to carry. We want to make sure that we are doing everything in our power to make the euthanasia experience the least painful as possible for our clients and their pets. While a medical diagnosis may seem black and white, the reality of what needs to be done in a loved pet's best interest may not always seem clear. In veterinary medicine we wear many hats. Some days they are as a veterinarian or technician, helping to physically care for a pet, treat them for an ailment or even perform surgery to make them better in some way. Other days, our job is to be a friend to our clients when they need us. To provide compassion and guidance to help them make these important decisions that impact them and their families. I feel strongly that when faced with a painful end and no hope of any more quality of life, euthanasia is the greatest gift we have to give to say thank you for all that they have given us. 

In veterinary medicine we wear many hats. Some days they are as a veterinarian or technician, helping to physically care for a pet, treat them for an ailment or even perform surgery to make them better in some way. Other days, our job is to be a friend to our clients when they need us.




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Veterinary
Technician
SpecialistSM



VNS

Veterinary
Nurse
SpecialistSM

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Upon successful completion of the academy's credentialing process and examination, you will earn the designation **Veterinary Technician Specialist** or **Veterinary Nurse Specialist**, along with the right to use the VTS or VNS logo (shown above).

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- ▶ Behavior
- ▶ Clinical Pathology
- ▶ Clinical Practice
- ▶ Dentistry
- ▶ Dermatology
- ▶ Diagnostic Imaging
- ▶ Emergency & Critical Care
- ▶ Equine Nursing
- ▶ Internal Medicine
- ▶ Laboratory Animals
- ▶ Nutrition
- ▶ Ophthalmology
- ▶ Physical Rehabilitation
- ▶ Surgery
- ▶ Zoological Medicine

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National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA)

NAVTA is a dynamic community of credentialed veterinary technicians dedicated to advancing the profession of veterinary nursing through advocacy, awareness, and professional development

NAVTA CVTS-RECOGNIZED SPECIALTY ACADEMIES

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The Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians—AVECCTN has a goal of certifying Veterinary Technicians to assure the veterinary profession and the public that AVECCTN-certified technicians possess the knowledge and experience needed to work effectively in well-equipped and well-staffed emergency or critical care facilities.



The Academy of Veterinary Behavior Technicians—AVBT promotes excellence in the discipline of veterinary behavior medicine. Veterinary Technician Specialists with behavior certification will demonstrate superior knowledge in scientifically-based and humanely-based techniques of behavior health, problem prevention, training, management, and behavior modification. The AVBT advances the skills of veterinary technicians within the discipline of animal behavior and furthers their recognition as critical components of the veterinary behavior team in creating, maintaining, and strengthening the human-animal bond.



The Academy of Veterinary Dental Technicians—AVDT gives technicians the opportunity to expand their knowledge and their professional value by becoming a credentialed specialist in the field of animal dentistry.



The Academy of Equine Veterinary Nursing Technicians—AEVNT advances the education and professional recognition of credentialed equine veterinary technicians who display excellence in, and dedication to, providing superior nursing care to equine patients.



The Academy of Internal Medicine Veterinary Technicians—AIMVT promotes interest in and advances the skills of Veterinary Technicians within the disciplines of veterinary internal medicine by providing cutting edge continuing education, working with veterinarians to advocate for superior patient care, providing client education, and ensuring consumer protection. Sub-specialties include: Cardiology, Large Animal Internal Medicine (including Equine & Production Animal), Neurology, Oncology, and Small Animal Internal Medicine.



The Academy of Veterinary Clinical Pathology Technicians—AVCPT advances the area of and promotes excellence in the discipline of veterinary clinical pathology.



The Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians—AVNT supports the area of veterinary nutrition by demonstrating the expertise of veterinary technicians in the field of nutrition and by endorsing technicians as a vital part of the veterinary nutrition profession.



The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Anesthesia and Analgesia—AVTAA promotes patient safety, consumer protection, professionalism and excellence in anesthesia care and pain management. The Veterinary Technician Specialist in Anesthesia and Analgesia is there to provide your pet with exceptional care before, during and after a procedure.



The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice—AVTCP is modeled after the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners and has four species-specific categories: canine/feline, feline, exotic companion animal and production medicine. The academy's credentialed veterinary technicians provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary care. Candidates are expected to demonstrate expertise in a range of clinical disciplines within their species specialty.



The Academy of Veterinary Surgical Technicians—AVST encourages experienced surgical technicians to enhance their education and training by pursuing a surgical specialty. AVST provides a standardized route through which technicians may qualify for a national examination to become a VTS (Surgery).



The Academy of Veterinary Zoological Medicine Technicians—AVZMT was created specifically for veterinary technicians working in zoological medicine and offers the opportunity for zoo technicians to demonstrate excellence in the field.

These Academies have met the NAVTA CVTS requirements for provisional recognition:

The Academy of Laboratory Animal Veterinary Technicians and Nurses—ALAVTN promotes excellence in animal welfare and medical care for animals used in laboratory animal settings.



The Academy of Dermatology Veterinary Technicians—ADVT promotes excellence through specialization in the discipline of veterinary dermatology by demonstrating an advanced proficiency of dermatologic procedures, working with the veterinary team and client to advocate superior patient care, and providing cutting-edge continuing education.



Academy of Veterinary Ophthalmic Technicians—AVOT advocates ocular health while advancing the knowledge and practice standards in the field of ophthalmology. The Academy operates under the guidance of NAVTA and ACVO to foster yearly continuing education, professional development, and networking with industry partners.



The Academy of Physical Rehabilitation Veterinary Technicians—APRVT provides assistance in veterinary physical rehabilitation, encouraging veterinary professionals and colleagues to further their education, while improving the quality of animals' lives.



The Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Diagnostic Imaging—AVTDI is comprised of veterinary technicians dedicated to performing a higher level of veterinary diagnostic imaging modalities such as: digital radiographs, fluoroscopic special procedures, CT scan, MRI, ultrasound, and nuclear medicine imaging.



CAREER SUCCESS IN 2024:

ADVANCING PET EUTHANASIA SKILLS

Rebecca Rose, RVT, CPEP, CCC
Certified Peaceful Euthanasia Professional / Certified Career Coach

“Euthanasia is considered one of the most common procedures in veterinary medicine,” states Dr. Kathy Cooney in a previous blog, *Veterinary Technicians in Euthanasia Work, Encouragement*.

You may be surprised to learn within the top 5 services a veterinary professional in practice delivers is that of euthanasia. Yet, formally trained veterinary professionals receive little education in the service, let alone making it a pleasant, gentle experience for the patient and client.

Because of this, are you considering advancing your career and knowledge in the art of euthanasia? Perhaps you know of a colleague that will benefit from more education and advanced training? You are encouraged to share this blog with your team because it is time for elevated euthanasia experiences to be on everyone's radar!

Setting Career Goals in 2024

As you set your sites on 2024, remember to include your career goals:

1. Explore your ideas with your supervisor and getting support
2. Fill out a **Veterinary Professional Career Road Map**, tracking the path
3. Attend continuing education aligned with your goal
4. Celebrate the achievement (too often this part of goal setting is forgotten!)
5. Share the knowledge and skills with your team, elevating the patient and client experience

Advanced Skills in Pet Euthanasia

As you read the introduction about euthanasia being a top service veterinary professionals deliver, how did that make you feel? Have you considered best practices and how the service can be better in support of the pet, client, and for the sake of the veterinary team?

A goal in career advancement may be **Specific** (title in your SMART Goal within the Career Road Map) to Elevating Best Practices in Pet Euthanasia encompassing:

- A comfortable, safe setting for pet patient and client
- The time for a peaceful euthanasia
- Grief support for the client and family during a time of loss
- Choice in aftercare conversation and payment before the appointment
- The pet and family remaining together the entire time of the euthanasia appointment
- Pre-sedation and/or level of anesthesia
- Considerations in memorialization

Continuing Education Goal Example

As an example, let's consider Teresa, a seasoned RVT whose 2024 goal is to become the veterinary clinic's End-of-Life Champion (another **Specific** title for the Career Road Map). She is passionate about helping pets through the final life transition and assisting the family through their grief.

Teresa sits down with her manager to discuss her career goals. Together they decide on a continuing educational plan, determining the support she will

receive from the clinic. Her manager agrees to approve time-off requests for advanced training. Financially, she has a CE allowance and a professional merit allowance (\$500 total).

She finds the *Companion Animal Euthanasia Training Academy* (CAETA) website and feels the organization's mission meets her needs and is offering online courses! This falls within her CE allowance.

The 10-hour CAETA Master Course covers topics in:

- Client communication during euthanasia
- Physiology and pharmacology of the euthanasia drugs she will be using
- Case studies
- Euthanasia technique training
- Aftercare considerations

Finally, she has negotiated with her manager a wage increase once she completes the CAETA certification course and will be using the CAETA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for euthanasia. Bonus! Teresa is on her way to fulfilling her goal, offering a gentler experience to the clinic's clients, improving patient care, and elevating the team. She's got a great plan!

Benefits of Advanced Euthanasia Training

Here are possible benefits a veterinary professional may define when filling out the Career Road Map.

- **Benefit to the pet:** receiving a pain free, gentle euthanasia experience

- **Benefit to the pet owner:** receiving compassionate care during end-of-life conversations and ability to be with the pet during the service with grief support before, during, and after the loss of beloved pet
- **Benefit to the veterinary practice:** knowing the service during end-of-life supports the veterinary team in gracefully performing all aspects of care for the pet and client, pain free, gentle, continuing to build upon the human-animal bond and relationship and retaining valuable team members
- **Benefit to veterinary professional once achieved:** support in career advancement, growing skills in best practices with compassion, non-judgement, and techniques decreasing burnout and compassion fatigue, receiving tools in self-regulating and coping with delivery of pet euthanasia with clients present and certification as a professional in peaceful euthanasia.

Celebrate Accomplishment

Remember, as part of the goal setting, to celebrate the completion of the course and

ONLINE RESOURCES

Veterinary Professional Career Road Map – shorturl.at/lnwK6

Companion Animal Euthanasia Training Academy (CAETA) – learn.caetainternational.com/

> **10-hour CAETA Master Course** – shorturl.at/fKX12

> **\$20 CAETA Registration Savings Coupon** – shorturl.at/chvH8


> **Evangelizing New Euthanasia Protocols to Coworkers** – shorturl.at/egnOS



acknowledge the compassionate skills elevating best practices in the delivery of pet euthanasia. A team member may want to be highlighted on the website, throw an ice cream social with the team, or have certification hang on the wall in a predominant location.

As a gift to you in advancing your career, receive a Savings Coupon for \$30.00 on your CAETA Registration.

For readers who may experience pushback in advancing a gentler euthanasia experience within your practice, you are not alone. You may find a few gems and support in *Evangelizing New Euthanasia Protocols to Coworkers*.

Wishing you continued success in your veterinary career. When you have questions, feel free to reach out! 

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VETERINARY PROFESSIONAL CAREER ROAD MAP

Name _____ Date _____

VISION OF THE FUTURE

What is it I want to be doing in my career?

How long will it take me to get there?

Obstacles I need to overcome?

Those supporting me in my professional development/mentors

1: _____ 2: _____

Benefit to the pet:

Benefit to the pet owner:

Benefit to the veterinary practice:

Benefit to me, once I achieve my professional goal:

SMART Goal

Specific (give it a title)

Measured (where service is right now and what does the outcome look like)

Attainable (brainstorm all aspects to completion, continuing education, equipment needed, financial cost)

Finance/cost

Relevant (supporting and meeting the values, vision, mission of the organization, individual)

Timely (beginning, middle and end timeline)

Date started: _____ Middle review (1): _____ Middle review (2): _____ Completed: _____

Manager/Veterinarian _____ Date _____

Team member _____ Date _____

Celebrate (e.g., ice cream social): _____



IMPROVING LARGE ANIMAL PRACTICE EFFICIENCY

with Credentialed Veterinary Technicians

Meg Ann Harrington, BS, CVT, VTS (PAIM)

Large animal veterinary practice faces many challenges, including competitive markets, labor shortages, increasing costs of goods, and more. One major concern that our profession currently recognizes is a decrease in the total number of large animal veterinarians available to service producers despite increased demand for large animal veterinary care in many regions.^{1,2,3} Recent data from the AVMA states that less than 4% of veterinarians are employed in food-animal practice.¹ There has also been a 15% decline in the total number of veterinarians who practice in food animal or mixed animal medicine.^{1,3} This makes it extremely difficult for livestock to get adequate veterinary care to keep herds and flocks healthy. The lack of veterinary care and oversight creates a significant concern for animal welfare and food safety. As this shortage continues, the scarcity of large animal veterinarians for foreign animal disease surveillance

becomes a significant concern in securing the business continuity of our food supply.

Exploring veterinarian shortages

According to the USDA, 500 counties across 46 states report critical veterinarian shortages in 2022.² Since the early 2000s, more veterinarians have elected for better pay and more reasonable work hours that are observed in practices that focus primarily or exclusively on “companion” animals.³ You can walk into almost any veterinary practice today and undoubtedly find that veterinary teams are under severe strain. While these issues existed before the Covid-19 pandemic, they have been accelerated post-pandemic.⁴ Considering the number of veterinarians that will be retiring and the number of new graduates entering practice, a new study estimates that veterinarians may need to be as much as 40% more productive to fulfill the demand for care by 2030.⁴ In recent years,

there has been a significant increase in the number of small hobby farms that are vastly spread out geographically, making it more difficult for veterinarians to cover the need without being overloaded.³ Additionally, traveling excessive distances is not economically sound for a veterinary practice. More time spent in the truck and less time spent seeing patients results in less revenue generated. Furthermore, veterinary care can sometimes be cost-prohibitive in large animal medicine because of an animal’s monetary value.

Many veterinarians leave mixed animal practices because of long hours, late nights, burnout, and a poor work/life balance.^{5,6,7} Unfortunately, bullying and discrediting of other professionals, compassion fatigue, and barely livable wages have also plagued our profession, causing people to leave the industry in astounding numbers creating a workforce challenge.^{5,6} A 2022 Today’s Veterinary Business survey revealed that

634 of the 925 respondents left veterinary medicine altogether.⁸ Of the respondents, 291 were still in veterinary medicine, and of the 291, nearly half (135) reported that they would leave practice within the following year.⁸ The main drivers were low wages, burnout, a toxic work environment, and poor workplace culture.⁸ Most importantly, 46% of them would return to practice if the reasons they left were addressed and fixed.⁸

It is essential that we find ways to keep veterinary practices sustainable by maintaining and fulfilling the current generation's needs without compromising future generations' desires.

Identifying the problems

It is essential that we find ways to keep veterinary practices sustainable by maintaining and fulfilling the current generation's needs without compromising future generations' desires. Also, it is vital to ensure financial growth, quality patient care, and good social well-being of all veterinary professionals. Two significant problems that warrant solutions have been identified: doctors are burnt out because of the increased patient demand and a poor work-life/balance, and veterinary technicians are dissatisfied with not being used appropriately and trusted to do their jobs.^{5,6,7,9,10} The lack of technician trust and utilization was revealed in the 2022 NAVTA Demographic survey that found the top barriers to better utilization were a lack of trust or confidence by the veterinarian in the veterinary technician's skillset and not allowing veterinary technicians to handle tasks they are licensed to perform.^{9,10} Forty-seven percent of the survey respondents reported

dissatisfaction with job fulfillment in the veterinary technology profession.^{9,10} Regrettably, there are veterinarians who hesitate to fully utilize the skills of their credentialed veterinary technicians. This is due to their lack of knowledge on how they can collaborate with these veterinary technicians or an unfounded fear that these technicians may eventually take over their jobs. This is improbable because veterinary technicians cannot practice without being employed by a veterinarian. Veterinary technicians also do not have the authority to perform certain duties such as prescribing medications, performing major surgeries, or engaging in the practice of regulatory medicine.^{11,12}

How credentialed staff can help

One growing business model that is becoming increasingly popular and promotes improved practice productivity is properly utilizing credentialed staff members (VTS, CVT, LVT, RVT). In certain jurisdictions, credentialed staff can act as "providers" of care as an extension of the supervising veterinarian for various veterinary services. This model also promotes the best utilization of a credentialed veterinary technician's education and skill set while simultaneously alleviating excessive strain on the veterinarian's patient load. Another way to promote improved practice efficiency is employing well-trained veterinary assistants responsible for blood draws, restraint, running automated laboratory tests, husbandry, environmental management, instrument sterilization, and administrative duties like scheduling appointments and entering charges, much like a medical assistant or nurse assistant would in human medicine.

In a mixed animal hospital, under direct and indirect supervision, depending on what the jurisdiction allows, credentialed technicians can perform advanced technical procedures, dispense prescribed medications, and provide advanced nursing care.^{11,13} Credentialed veterinary technicians can perform many

routine preventative care appointments like vaccines, diagnostic testing, and reproductive care, allowing doctors to see more in-depth medical or surgical cases.^{11,13} Credentialed veterinary technicians can assess and manage small and large animal sick appointments from start to finish when a doctor's schedule is overloaded. This is possible in some jurisdictions under various levels of supervision because credentialed veterinary technicians must follow an established written or verbal protocol developed by the supervising veterinarian. Protocols include guides for working up sick patients, performing diagnostic testing, and interpreting the results so that the veterinarian can create a medical diagnosis from those findings and prescribe treatment.¹¹

Credentialed veterinary technicians should be able to consult with the supervising veterinarian in person or by phone for all cases when needed. Consultation is also required when a case does not align with the written or verbal protocol to ensure appropriate collaboration and the provision of a high standard of care.¹¹ In 2022, IDEXX conducted one of the largest empirical studies on practice productivity, incorporating input from more than 750 practices and analyzing more than 4.2 million clinical visits. Interestingly, 87% of practices saw an opportunity to increase their practice's operational efficiency, and 65% indicated that technician-led appointments positively impacted productivity.⁴ Practice personas classified in the study as "well-oiled machines" were evidenced by technician-led appointments for high-value services such as wellness visits and with medical staff supporting the veterinarian that performed higher-skilled tasks during clinical visits.⁴ This indicates that practices expanding their model to include credentialed veterinary technicians will achieve higher productivity.

Some jurisdictions allow veterinary technicians to work under indirect supervision.¹¹ This allows technicians to go out on a farm visit to assess a patient

and follow a written or verbal protocol on how to treat or manage the patient.¹¹ The veterinary technician can also report examination findings to the veterinarian by phone or other electronic means, who may advise and prescribe treatment so that the veterinary technician can dispense or perform treatment without the veterinarian on the premises as long as a veterinary-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) preexists.¹¹ This strategy allows the veterinarian to divide and conquer ensuring all patients within the practice are seen in a timely manner to prevent a delay in care.

Veterinary technicians can perform many of the routine management procedures that small farms may need assistance with like castrations, disbudding, dehorning, vaccinations, and many reproductive services.¹¹ This presents an excellent opportunity for veterinary technicians to provide client education on preventative herd health programs and perform disease surveillance to ensure biocontainment when necessary. A thorough review of each state's veterinary practice act on allowable tasks must be performed to determine how a veterinarian can best utilize a credentialed veterinary

technician. Unfortunately, many practice acts are vague, nondescriptive, and lack a defined scope of practice; therefore, it would be advisable to contact a state's licensing board to receive the most current and accurate information regarding allowable tasks since legislative changes have recently taken place in several states across the country.

Clarifying roles

An additional growth opportunity in the profession is the need to improve transparency between veterinarians and the public regarding the titles and roles of non-veterinarians within veterinary practice. Many are led to believe that anyone who is not a veterinarian working in a veterinary practice is a veterinary technician, which is not the case. Many states have title protection for credentialed veterinary technicians, which could result in a fine or misdemeanor for a veterinarian who improperly represents someone in their practice as a veterinary technician.

It is essential to understand that a **veterinary technician** is an individual duly licensed to practice veterinary technology under the provisions of the state's veterinary practice act.^{11,12} A

veterinary technician receives a certificate from a state-recognized program or an associate degree from an AVMA-accredited college-level veterinary technology program.^{11,12}

A **veterinary technologist** is a bachelor's degree recipient from an AVMA-accredited college program.^{11,12} To become credentialed, veterinary technicians and technologists must pass a national board certifying examination called the VTNE or Veterinary Technician National Examination.^{11,12}

A **veterinary technician specialist** is a veterinary technician or veterinary technologist who has been mentored by a diplomate or veterinarian. A specialist must complete a formal process of education, training, and structured clinical experience before passing a board examination through a specialty academy approved by the Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America.^{12,14}

This messaging should be passed on to your clients and the public so that they can recognize and appreciate the education and credentials of your veterinary technician, technologist, or technician

Veterinary technicians can perform many of the routine management procedures that small farms may need assistance with like castrations, disbudding, dehorning, vaccinations, and many reproductive services.





Just like new graduates from veterinary school need mentorship, veterinary technicians need the same.

specialist. Understanding the true value of these credentialed veterinary technicians in veterinary practice will undoubtedly increase client perception and acceptance of technician-led appointments.

How credentialed staff can address productivity loss

A loss of practice productivity often results when veterinarians do the work of qualified veterinary technicians. This prevents or delays the veterinarian from attending to complex medical cases, performing surgeries, or executing regulatory duties; therefore, causing revenue losses and further delaying patients the care they need. By utilizing credentialed technicians appropriately, the practice can see more patients without increasing operating hours, thus improving everyone's work/life balance and promoting more timely patient care.

Proper utilization also results in a more

engaged team, higher job satisfaction, less turnover, and increased practice revenue. In a 2007 JAVMA study, three hundred twenty-eight veterinarians responded fully to the questions on gross practice revenue and staff; their responses were included in the analysis.^{8,15} Results indicated that the number of credentialed veterinary technicians per veterinarian in a practice had a significant ($p = 0.02$) impact on gross practice revenue, such that the average veterinary practice generated \$161,493 more gross revenue for each unit increase in the number of credentialed veterinary technicians per veterinarian.^{8,15} Adjusting for inflation in 2022, that is approximately \$220,000.^{8,15} On the other hand, non-credentialed veterinary assistants per veterinarian were not significantly associated with gross practice revenue.^{8,15}

Unfortunately, many veterinary care services have slowly, over time, been cherry-picked from the profession and

turned into exemptions in many veterinary practice acts across the country. This has allowed lay individuals to perform procedures that have been traditionally considered the practice of veterinary medicine. Some of those procedures include artificial insemination, embryo transfer, pregnancy determination, equine dentistry, and physical rehabilitation treatment modalities like laser, shockwave, and pulsed electromagnetic therapy. One option to return these services to the profession and ensure high-quality patient care is to utilize the skills of credentialed veterinary technicians under the supervision of licensed veterinarians. This collaborative care approach allows veterinarians to expand the scope of services they offer and potentially their service areas by delegating these tasks to credentialed veterinary technicians.

Mentoring and retention

Just like new graduates from veterinary school need mentorship, veterinary technicians need the same. It is unrealistic to expect new graduate veterinarians to hit the ground running when entering practice with one or two dystocias under their belt and limited clinical experience. The same applies to veterinary technicians, who will build on their didactic teachings through daily clinical experiences like new veterinarians.

Continuing education opportunities and career advancement guidance through a specialty academy can provide the technician and the practice with new growth opportunities. Advanced clinical instruction in specialties like large animal internal medicine, equine nursing, and production medicine can give technicians the expertise to provide consulting services and perform advanced technical duties that may contribute to increased practice profitability and high-quality patient care.

Once a practice devotes time and invests in training its employees, considerable effort should be devoted to retaining those staff members to promote job fulfillment and to get a reasonable return



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on the investment. Staff turnover is an expensive problem that can be avoided when practices learn how to motivate their employees properly.

Conclusion

Proper utilization of credentialed veterinary technicians and role delineation in veterinary practices can help improve practice productivity. Veterinary clinics that are struggling to remain healthy should consider examining the efficiency of the workplace to identify areas needing improvement. Determine what is required to implement changes to enhance practice productivity while also supporting the high standards of quality veterinary care. Precedence must be given to work-life balance to promote personal well-being when considering the future of veterinary practice models.

Empowering and trusting credentialed veterinary technicians to perform assigned duties within the scope of practice provides a unique opportunity for the profession to address many of the current challenges encountered. 



Proper utilization of credentialed veterinary technicians and role delineation in veterinary practices can help improve practice productivity.

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TOXIC

Work Environments

Jamie Rauscher, LVT

Those of us that work in veterinary medicine work with a variety of different people on a daily basis. We have those employees that are seemingly always in a good mood, so helpful and happy to be at work. We also have the employees that are just there to clock in and out, coming to work and doing their job. They are not happy or sad, positive or negative, just neutral. Then there are those that are determined to bring others down with them, contributing to drama in the workplace as well as always seeming to point out what is going wrong and sharing openly and outwardly their unhappiness with everything in general in the clinic.

Negativity in the Workplace

Are negative team members really “team members?” Thinking about this as more of a question also allows us to consider whether our hospital management teams are being held hostage by people with bad attitudes. We wonder why some of our employees get away with bad behavior while others do not. Let’s discuss why this happens and what you can do to address it.

How do toxic work environments impact that workplace?

We need to think about what damage these team members are doing to our clinics and if these employees have an

impact on their co-workers. Do they go without notice? Or are they making more of an impact than you realize? Toxic work environments breed unrest, unhealthy competition, low morale, constant stressors, negativity, sickness, high turnover, and even bullying. The effects of toxic workplaces typically follow us home. They take over our conversations with loved ones, impact our sleep and generally cause worry and stress. Our profession is stressful enough each day in our clinics without having it follow us home in a negative manner. If you feel that you are working in a toxic environment you may not be alone. This is more common than you think.

Are negative team members really “team members?”

My heart hurts when I think about the current state of our profession and the negativity associated with it. We have new and upcoming people looking into veterinary medicine as a career who are going to be impacted by toxicity that has run rampant in our field. We all know that we need to grow our profession and bring new talent to the industry so we have more help in our clinics and can continue to help our patients. Technicians and assistants who are looking into veterinary medicine are discouraged from joining the profession due to repeated feedback on lack of longevity in the field and low pay. If they take a chance on us and join our ranks, will we push them back out the door with our toxicity? I strongly believe that if we all embraced how successful we could be and banded together rather than working in opposition to each other, veterinary medicine would be a happier, more cohesive profession to join.

Negative Team Members

The negative team members that tend to run the toxic environments we are all familiar with are truly not “team members.” Yet, we consider them team members because we employ them, and they are on the payroll. This is an issue that deserves a closer look. The perception may be that they are advocating for others by speaking up when no one else does and saying what others are thinking but are too afraid to verbalize.

Or is that what they tell others to defend their actions? Negative team members in my experience tend to want to teach their clinics a lesson proving their point that there are things wrong in the clinic that they believe should be changed. While the odds are that your clinic is not the first they have worked for, the behavior they are exhibiting is likely not new either. The patterns they exhibit are the ways they are used to behaving and what has been accepted in the past.

Consider the following:

- Is the “negative” team member always the loudest to voice the faults of others?
- What are they really saying and what are they trying to accomplish?
- Does this mean that they are unhappy with their current situation and simply feel the need to broadcast it to others?
- Have they ever addressed their concerns directly with their boss or is it always a public display?

Despite the challenge managing these kinds of employees presents, as managers we must consider their objectives and concerns the same as we do for someone else. When meeting with these employees, you should ask the following:

- What are some specific examples of the issues you believe need to be addressed?

- Do you have any suggested solutions to the issues at hand?
 - Do you believe you have a safe environment in which to discuss these issues with your management?
 - Was this conversation productive for you?
- As a manager, you should also consider whether or not the conversation was productive and whether or not the end result was in everyone’s best interest. Doing a little more research into what is happening amongst your team may be a good way to find out what the issues truly are.

Uncovering Issues

It is important to understand what your employees are having issues with and to have a finger on the pulse of the inner workings of your clinic. Things that can create grumbling amongst your team can include things like difficult clients, management, workload, schedules, compensation.

Solving Issues

Everyone can point out what issues they have with their current job. You must ask the right questions to get to the root of

their complaints. Add a suggestion box or a clinic vision board. Open your door to your team members. Make them realize that their opinions matter and you are listening to them. No clinic is perfect. There is no way possible that can even be something that a clinic can profess. We are all human. We have faults. Those faults can pass onto where we work and can negatively impact our workplace, despite our best intentions. The mythical unicorn clinic exists. It is out there. It takes hard work and determination to make your clinic be viewed in that positive light.

Staffing Stressors

Our clients can be difficult at best sometimes. Stressors triggering bad behavior seem to be related to sick pets, lack of funds and our veterinary clinic’s overall inability to get patients taken care of in a timelier manner. When clients are upset that their pets are unwell or they cannot afford the necessary treatment, they tend to take it out on our teams. Being rude, making derogatory statements or even yelling at our staff is not unheard of. Our days are busy with fitting in



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appointments, surgeries, and patient care, and the workload can be daunting at times. Lack of sufficient staffing contributes to an already stressful environment. A management team that wants their clinic to be successful is constantly looking at appointments, revenue, and payroll, trying to add new employees as they can to help relieve the workload in any way they can. Can you provide the schedule that your staff likes and wants to work within? Can you be creative? Are you stuck based on the hours that need to be worked and the lack of employees to fill those time slots? A busy clinic means that hopefully your staff is well paid and there are profits to be made. Are you paying your team what is expected while always striving to do better?

Due to the pandemic, our lives in and out of the clinic have shifted. Things will never be as they were before Covid. Try as we might to keep the influences of the past three years from continually impacting our teams, it's an underlying current that is still influencing our world. Burn out has contributed to a greatly reduced work force. The numbers of new patients that clinics are seeing in relation to the number of new veterinarians and credentialed technicians joining the field are staggering. People home during the pandemic adopted millions of pets to help keep them company. Our schools in turn have not graduated near enough staff to take care of them. It is not for a lack of trying. Currently veterinary programs are attempting to increase the numbers of their classes and help to increase the workforce. Current staffing may have left your management team in a position where they truly feel they are being held hostage by their toxic employees.

How management contributes

Management in our clinics is not above being a contributor to unrest in the profession. While it may seem that their jobs are a cakewalk, it is far from it. Several clinics have gone through this shift over the last 3 years and now feel as though they work for their staff and not

Sometimes you have to weigh the pros and cons of keeping that team member versus letting them go and doing without that person. What would that do to your team?

the other way around. If they were to let your toxic co-workers go, where would that leave the clinic and your team? Do your toxic co-workers believe they have the upper hand in a way that protects them from being let go? The lack of new members joining the workforce has turned the tables on many decisions that are made by clinics. Having some staff is sometimes viewed as better than having no staff. Waiting for a new employee to join the team to let a less than stellar one go is a real thing. Sometimes you have to weigh the pros and cons of keeping that team member versus letting them go and doing without that person. What would that do to your team? Is it better to be short staffed until a new employee is able to take the old staff member's spot? Or is that not even an option for your clinic?


Veterinary medicine is in a position where the employee has a very bright future in front of them. If you feel your clinic is in a predicament like this, do you feel comfortable having a conversation with management about how it is impacting the staff? Do your co-workers feel if the toxic people were gone that it would be better for everyone? Are you all willing to step up to help out in the interim while you are trying to hire to replace those no longer with you? Sometimes you feel that your co-workers are getting away with their bad behavior due to them being a favorite of a member of management or that current staffing is leaving the clinic with no other option.

As those of us in management know, sometimes you feel as though you will

make the wrong decision regardless of weighing these considerations. To terminate a toxic employee has an increased number of ramifications for your leaders to deal with. Often that toxic person continues their tirade all the way to the curb, trying to convince as many people as they can that they were done wrong. You have to trust that your leads will help to smooth the waters and be a levelheaded voice in your clinic. It is worth having a sit-down with your lead staff to let them know what is going on and ask them for their help. While it is no one's business to know what goes on behind closed doors, let them know enough to get a buy-in from them to help. This is a good way to help your leaders see what a touch of management life is like and how they can rise up, allowing them to grow a little in the process.

Conclusion

What is the solution to all of this? There is no one perfect solution to dealing with a toxic work environment. As a staff member you do owe your team the respect of coming to work every day and doing your best. That is what you signed up for when you committed to working at that clinic. If you have concerns that need to be addressed by someone, I encourage you to go to your leads or management team. If you do not feel comfortable talking to your supervisor, find someone who does. Do this in a respectful manner that will help benefit everyone.

If you have addressed your concerns and still are unhappy, consider a life change that will benefit everyone. Bad mouthing your clinic will get you nowhere in the long run. Your clinic may not be the root of the problem. Take a look in the mirror and think long and hard on your concerns, your history in the field and what has happened in the past. The clinic you are with may not be the clinic for everyone. Do what you need to do to be happy. Our careers are our lifeline in this field. Make yours matter. 



ARE WE NURSES?

Janine Fales, RVT, AS (Vet Tech), BS (Math), PhD (Chem Eng)

Have you spent time in a human hospital lately? My sister was recently in ICU and then on a trauma floor for a week with a primary diagnosis of left frontal intraparenchymal hemorrhage, right frontal subarachnoid hemorrhage and fractured spinous process of C4.* As you might expect, we saw the physician once a day and usually not the same one. Her superb care was a result of excellent technician skills and awesome *nursing*. We could learn from the way the human hospital roles are integrated and differentiated.

We could learn from the way the human hospital roles are integrated and differentiated.

Have you ever read the Nursing Practice Act for your state? We, as credentialed veterinary technicians, aren't quite the equivalent human nurses (or are we?). Where Registered Nurses have more flexibility in nursing diagnosis and initiation of nursing interventions and plans, we have a broad spectrum of responsibilities that include anesthesia. (Should we and do we have the flexibility to develop, assess and modify treatment plans?) In order to perform anesthesia, a Registered Nurse must successfully complete an accredited nurse anesthesia education program at a Master's level or higher, be certified by the national board of certification and licensed by the state nursing board as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. This makes sense—an anesthetic error in a human hospital could mean death of a human, even with a MD

or OD at hand. Of course, we believe that our veterinary patients deserve the same odds of anesthetic survival.

What struck me in the reading of the New Mexico Nursing Practice Act¹ is the repeated notion that individuals must function within parameters “based upon education, experience, licensure, certification” and within their “expertise commensurate with education and verified competence.” Many types of nursing professionals are defined, using descriptors of “basic,” “substantial,” and “specialize” for the knowledge required of each position.

Many paraprofessionals have been promoted from kennel assistant to veterinary assistant to veterinary “technician” long before (and frankly, even after) their state statute may have regulated/protected the title of “veterinary technician.” Staff have equated the

* My sister is home and recovering. The staff in the hospital was visually differentiated by the color of the scrubs they wore – grey=RN, purple=LPN, blue=technician and CNA.)

title “veterinary technician” with an internally measured level of competency and may be hard pressed to give up this honor. Based on my recent experience in the hospital, the technicians (radiology, ultrasound, physical therapy, respiratory) and CNAs executed their skills flawlessly. The nurses did the rest—from comforting and listening to my sister and us to fluidly changing the nursing plan based on how she was responding to the treatment (and emerging concerns). In veterinary medicine, we are called upon to do both the job of the technician and the nurse. To that end, the term “veterinary nurse” seems more inclusive and descriptive for the scope of what a credentialed veterinary technician could perform.

Knowing our limits

Non-credentialed veterinary staff are not our competition. There are many non-credentialed veterinary staff that have exceptional skills just as there are many newly minted veterinary technicians who have much to learn in a real-world environment. For the health of the patient and the team (and, thereby, the business), each member should be allowed and encouraged to work to the best of their skills, abilities, and knowledge. However, we are all responsible to know our boundaries and respect the limits of our experience and knowledge; this is part and parcel to being professional. The title/degree does not make us valuable to the team; the knowledge and life-long learning behind the title/degree does.

In reality, much of the knowledge

gained on-the-job is often limited to the short-term needs of the clinic/hospital or the enthusiasm of a co-worker. I submit that the practice of veterinary nursing (as in human nursing) is “based on specialized knowledge, judgment and nursing skills acquired through educational preparation in nursing and in the biological, physical, and behavioral sciences¹.” Accredited veterinary technology/nursing programs don’t only give facts and theories essential to veterinary nursing; the variety of teaching styles and personal interests of the instructors expose students to a more diverse experience from which to draw in their critical thinking. This integration of concepts is crucial to exceptional care of our veterinary patients.

Clarifying scope of practice

The ongoing discussion about scope of practice for veterinary technicians is interesting. The AAVSB model spells out what a credentialed veterinary technician can do (with commensurate supervision levels) without mention of what veterinary assistants cannot do. In many states, including mine, veterinary assistant is neither defined nor regulated in the Veterinary Practice Act (VPA). Perhaps it would be clearer to call out what a veterinary assistant cannot do, regardless of supervision level.

Likewise, the VPA could call out what credentialed veterinary technicians/nurses **cannot** do—practice veterinary medicine. While we typically condense what is means to practice veterinary medicine to diagnosis, prescription, and

surgery, the definition (at least in my state of New Mexico) is more extensive. It reads “the diagnosis, treatment, correction, change, relief or prevention of animal disease, deformity, defect, injury or other physical or mental condition, including the prescription or administration of any drug, medicine, biologic, apparatus, application, anesthetic or other therapeutic or diagnostic substance or technique and the use of any procedure for artificial insemination, testing for pregnancy, diagnosing and treating sterility or infertility or rendering advice with regard to any of these.”² To strengthen the understanding and delineation of the credentialed veterinary technician role, the VPA could define the practice of veterinary technology. Additionally, the VPA could easily define Veterinary Technician Specialist as a credentialed veterinary technician with specialized education.

Why clarity is needed

Having a non-credentialed veterinary staff monitoring anesthesia, recovery or patient care in the general practitioner setting is not usually an issue ... until it isn’t. Rapid response to a patient in acute crisis is vital to his/her immediate survival. Often, the nearest veterinarian will intervene in the management of the crisis. Given the lack of credentialed veterinary technicians in many areas of the United States, I believe it is incumbent on the veterinary facility to develop, test, and maintain competency of any non-credentialed staff monitoring anesthesia and recovery under immediate supervision of a veterinarian or credentialed veterinary technician. Additionally, lack of attention to the anesthesia should revoke one’s privilege to perform that function.


More insidious is the lack of recognition of abnormalities in a hospitalized patient’s progress. These anomalies can easily be missed by inexperienced or unknowledgeable staff, leading to poor progress, longer hospital stays, and even patient death. We are the eyes and ears

We are all responsible to know our boundaries and respect the limits of our experience and knowledge; this is part and parcel to being professional. The title/degree does not make us valuable to the team; the knowledge and life-long learning behind the title/degree does.

of the veterinarians who depend on us to provide important and trustworthy information about our patients. Sadly, the ramifications of inexperienced care are rarely quantified. Even when a formal complaint is lodged against a veterinarian, the root cause is rarely elicited. Perhaps the “cost” of losing a patient is too low.³

Conclusion

The public needs to understand their rights as a consumer. Veterinary teams need to acknowledge and respect the strengths and differences in veterinary staff. State Boards need to respect the role of veterinary technicians, include them in the conversation (e.g. a seat at the table) and assist in the propagation of correct title

use. We must be willing to help strengthen the quality of patient care. We must be strong enough to call out poor practices in our places of employment and be protected from retribution. We need to own our role as nurses, whether our title is nurse or technician. 

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