A Letter From Our Editor

Sara Calvarese, DVM, DACVO
Eye Care for Animals

To Our Valued Colleagues:

For over 27 years, Eye Care for Animals has continued to lead the highly specialized and ever expanding field of veterinary ophthalmology. This would not have been possible without our relationship with you, the veterinarians in the communities we serve. We see ourselves as an extension of your practice. Currently we have 30 locations in 12 states and are consistently striving to expand into underserved markets. We see ourselves providing the highest quality medical and surgical ophthalmic care for your patients. We aim to provide your practice with continuing education to increase your ability to provide quality ophthalmic care to those patients that either do not need a referral or financially cannot afford a specialist.

Our hospitals take pride in the fact that our staff is comprised of board-certified ophthalmologists, residents, skilled and trained ophthalmic technicians, and client care representatives. Eye Care for Animals currently boasts 26 board certified Veterinary Ophthalmologists, 3 board eligible Veterinary Ophthalmologists, and 13 residents in comparative ophthalmology, and as we grow we continue to train and attract industry leaders. Most recently:

- Dr. Keith Collins of Animal Eye Specialists in Pewaukee, Wisconsin merged with Eye Care for Animals.
- Dr. Marcella Ashton of Tucson, AZ, Dr. Matt Fife of Las Vegas, NV, Dr. Andrew Greller of Springfield, VA, Dr. Heather Kaese of Pewaukee, WI, and Dr. Amy Knollinger of Salt Lake City, UT, successfully completed the board certification examinations and became Diplomates of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists in October of 2008.
- Eye Care for Animals is one of the few private practice ophthalmology groups in the country to offer an American College of Veterinary Ophthalmology (ACVO) accredited ophthalmology residency program, which allows us to continue to attract highly motivated and qualified individuals. Our residency program offers participants an organized educational program as well as an excellent caseload that provides the residents with the wide variety of experiences that will be necessary to complete board certification and become well-rounded veterinary ophthalmologists.

Eye Care for Animals continually accepts applications for the veterinary ophthalmology residency program. Our new 2008 residents are:

- Dr. Micki Armour, Tustin, CA
- Dr. Paige Evans, Leesburg, VA
- Dr. Emily Moeller, Tustin, CA
- Dr. Kirsten Steele, Wheeling, IL
- Dr. Neal Wasserman, Phoenix, AZ

In addition to the growth happening within our staff, our facilities continue to expand our treatment options so that we may continuously make an effort to offer you and your clients the most comprehensive care possible. We constantly look for the latest advancements in veterinary ophthalmology to serve you and your clients’ pets to the fullest. Several of our doctors continue to be active in clinical research and we would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to some members of our doctor team and their research interests.

The ECFA doctor team maintains a strong presence at scientific meetings and symposiums in order to provide the newest advances in the ophthalmic medical sciences at our clinics. Additionally we strive to equip our hospitals with the latest in ophthalmic technology to provide state of the art services to your clients and patients. Two ECFA locations, Wheeling, Illinois (Dr. Steve Sisler) and Pasadena, California, (Dr. Allison Hoffman) perform retinal reattachment surgery. Dr. Hoffman spends one day each week working alongside leading human retinal surgeons to further elevate the standard of care in the field of veterinary vitreo-retinal surgery.

We are also pleased to be able to offer endoscopic cyclophotocoagulation at Wheeling (Dr. Steve Sisler), North Scottsdale (Dr. Jennifer Urbanz), Tustin (Dr. Douglas Esson) and Albuquerque (Dr. Gavin Kennard). This technology provides the latest and most effective surgical care for patients affected with glaucoma. Use of the endoscopic diode laser allows the surgeon to

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A Letter From Our Editor

accurately target and destroy the ciliary processes. Direct visualization of the intraocular structures eliminates many of the complications associated with older, less accurate trans-scleral techniques.

Dr. Douglas Esson, in conjunction with New World Medical Inc., has worked on the development of a range of glaucoma implant and drainage devices. These devices are designed specifically for the veterinary market, utilizing the experience gained in the human world to offer comparable care to that which a person affected by these diseases would enjoy. Dr. Scaglotti of the Tustin office provides highly specialized consultations in neurologic and orbital diseases of small animals. Your clients’ pets can now receive the same level of technical care that you would! Our doctors work closely with veterinary imaging centers to allow for more precise diagnoses and custom treatment plans to promote the best possible outcome for your clients and patients.

As a group we feel a fundamental obligation to continue to push the boundaries of medical science through our involvement in consulting, research and development, and interaction with private and academic institutions.

Current ECFA & collaborative research initiatives include:

Drs. Gwendolyn Lynch, Douglas Esson and Paige Evans are involved in a large retrospective study of feline cataract management and surgery. The size of our group provides a large case pool to draw from, lending significant statistical credibility. Feline cataract surgery is not commonly performed and through this study, our doctors hope to identify the most ideally suited treatment and management protocols for these unique animals. The preliminary data was presented at the 2008 meeting of the ACVO, dispersing the knowledge gained to allow smaller practices to benefit from this data and increase the quality of service which they provide to their own referral cases.

Drs. Joanna Norman and Kristina Narfstrom, DVM, PhD, Dip ECVO (University of Missouri) – a recognized leader in the field of veterinary retinal disease – are working together to develop new and effective retinal electro-diagnostic techniques. The collaboration was formed to further identify and characterize emerging disease patterns in select groups of patients. The preliminary data from their studies was also presented at the 2008 ACVO meeting. Typically the electroretinogram (ERG) is used to evaluate retinal function prior to cataract surgery or in the face of suspected retinal disease such as Sudden Aquired Retinal Degeneration (SARDS) or Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA). We take pride in our electro-diagnostic services and appreciate the opportunity to better educate our clients as to the nature of their companion’s disease and prognosis.

Dr. Nicole MacLaren continues to enjoy and develop exotic animal ophthalmology – most recently in association with the doctors of the Salt Lake City Zoo. Dr. MacLaren and a team of doctors and technical staff donated their time and services to perform cataract surgery on Eli the howler monkey, who can now see again and is enjoying an increased quality of life.

Dr. Paul Gerding may soon be performing cataract surgery on Ramar, a Gorilla from the Brookfield Zoo.

Dr. Heather Kaese, continues to work closely with researchers at the University of Minnesota to characterize the inheritance of uveitis in the Appaloosa horse. This disease afflicts hundreds of horses each year resulting in blindness, loss of use, and sometimes death. The research goal is to identify susceptibility genes in hopes of developing a test to determine if a horse is genetically predisposed to develop uveitis.

Drs. Kelli Combs and Allison Hoffman have utilized ultrasonic biometry and retinoscopy in order to assess and potentially improve the refractive error and hence quality of vision in canine patients undergoing pseudophakic cataract removal. Dr. Combs’ diligent work will contribute to the quality of vision and care which we are able to offer your patients. This work was also presented at this year’s ACVO conference.

Dr. Lynsey Smith is currently investigating the potential benefits of Xalacom™ with regards to the veterinary ophthalmic market. Xalacom™ is one of a host of emerging drugs with potential veterinary applications and represents an extension of the highly successful Xalatan® (a synthetic prostaglandin analogue which is typically administered once daily and significantly decreases intraocular pressure via its effects on uveoscleral or “alternate” outflow). Exploring the use of new medications will allow us to apply the most up to date medical therapy to all of the cases we treat.

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Dr. Tina Fife came to us with a strong research background and continues to work closely with the Braun Biological Center and industry leader Dr. Glen Gum, PhD. Dr. Fife is involved in several projects and most recently completed work which may help pave the way towards sustained release ocular implants for more effective and user-friendly treatment of diseases requiring long-term medications. Frequent medication application is often challenging for our clients and we strive to work closely with specialized ophthalmic compounding pharmacies in order to provide the most user-friendly formulations to maximize quality life for patients and their owners.

Drs. Reuben Merideth and Nancy Park have completed what may be the largest retrospective review of canine cataract surgery to date. Using data generated from approximately 300 patients from 5 clinics in Arizona, Drs. Merideth and Park were able to identify potential risk factors for complications, the most successful techniques, and the best post-operative care regimens. This data was presented at the 2008 ACVO meeting. Again, our significant patient volume as the largest national provider of veterinary ophthalmic care will allow us to share this information with our colleagues.

Our Culver City facility continues to expand and our doctors work closely with other veterinary specialties including dermatology, oncology and critical care, offering complete patient care services. In this office, Dr. Christin Chapman has completed in vitro research assessing the use of canine serum in the treatment of melanic (melting) corneal ulcers. Along with Drs. Douglas Esson and J. Glenn Songer, Ph.D., FAAM, DACVM at the University of Arizona, Dr. Chapman investigated the growth of bacteria in diabetic and non-diabetic serum and this data was presented at the 2008 ACVO meeting.

Drs. Tiffany Blocker and Matt Fife recently completed a review of canine conjunctival mast cell tumors. Their retrospective study determined that early surgical excision represents the most ideal course of action when faced with this disease. Drs. Blocker and Fife will publish their findings in the Journal of Veterinary Ophthalmology.

Drs. Sara Calvarese, Doug Esson and Kimberly M. Newkirk, Ph.D., DACVP, (University of Tennessee) have completed a study investigating the distribution of pigment within the ciliary bodies of blue vs brown eyed patients. This data will facilitate accurate patient selection and laser protocols when surgically treating patients affected with glaucoma. Although pigment distribution is obviously different between these groups of eyes, interestingly, the distribution within the aqueous–producing epithelial cells is similar. This data was generated using advanced histological techniques as well as spectrophotometry and will form the core of future clinical studies regarding laser-setting protocols. The data from this first study was presented at the 2008 ACVO annual convention.

Dr. Calvarese is now practicing in our rapidly expanding Upland & Palm Desert practices and she and Dr. Esson continue to offer clinical support and training to students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

Drs. Esson and Armour have completed a clinical trial of viscoelastic devices, similar to those used in human ophthalmic surgery, which facilitate complicated intraocular surgery. They are working closely with local biotech companies to develop newer and more effective (as well as cost-effective) products for the veterinary market. The findings of the viscoelastic study were presented at the ACVO meeting in Boston.

Dr. Jason Clark in conjunction with Dr. Ellison Bentley, DACVO (University of Wisconsin) researched the Comparison of Topical Nalbuphine and Oral Tramadol for the Treatment of Corneal Pain.

Drs. Micki Armour, Douglas Esson, Emily Moeller and Julius Brinkis are currently involved in a large study to investigate the potential efficacy of TPA (tissue plasminogen activator) as an adjunctive therapy to reduce the risk of post-operative ocular hypertension following phacoemulsification. Additionally, Drs. Armour, Esson, and Dick Dubielzig, DVM, DACVP, DACVO from the COPLOW laboratory at the University of Wisconsin, are performing a large-scale retrospective study in order to investigate the etiology and pathophysiology of Golden Retriever Uveitis (GRU). This frustrating, painful and potentially blinding disease affects golden retrievers across the United States and newer and more effective treatment strategies will hinge on improved understanding of its mechanisms. The unparalleled facilities and experience of the COPLOW lab and the extensive caseload of Eye Care for Animals will facilitate this study. Early signs of GRU include conjunctival hyperemia, uveitis and glaucoma and the disease is typically bilateral in presentation. At this time, the greatest chance of long term success is represented by early referral.

In addition to his work with COPLOW, Dr. Esson currently also consults for CORL, a collaborative team of internationally recognized vision scientists founded on providing world-class vision research support for industry. Please feel free to visit their website at: http://www.vetmed.wisc.edu/research/CORL/index.php. He also contributes to the Center for Vision Research, a group committed to fostering interactive research among scientists of different units of the University of Florida having a common interest in vision research. Please feel free to visit their website at: http://www.eye.ufl.edu/aboutcvr.shtml.

Dr. Esson presented some of his in-vivo MR imaging data at this year’s meeting in Gainesville in December. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of newer and earlier detection techniques for human patients, as well as veterinary patients, affected by glaucoma. Dr. Esson works closely with the Advanced Imaging Group in Tustin, CA, an on-site center offering the latest in MR & CT diagnostics and the very highest levels of patient care for your referral. Please visit them at http://www.avmi.net/.

We sincerely thank you for continuing to give Eye Care for Animals the opportunity to serve your patients and their families, and especially for allowing us to be part of your medical team.

With Warmest Regards,

Sara Calvarese, DVM, DACVO
Upland Eye Care for Animals
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WHAT'S NEW AT EYE CARE FOR ANIMALS?

Congratulations!

Dr. Marcella Ashton
Tucson, AZ

Dr. Matthew Fife
Las Vegas, NV

Dr. Andrew Greller
Springfield, VA

Dr. Heather Kaese
Pewaukee, WI

Dr. Amy Knollinger
Salt Lake City, UT

for attaining diplomate status in the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists.

Congratulations!

Dr. Joanna Norman
Arizona & New Mexico

Dr. Rustin Sturgeon
Overland Park, KS

Dr. Amy Thompson-Hom
Chicagoland, IL

for completing their residency in comparative Ophthalmology.

Recent Openings

Pewaukee, Wisconsin welcomes Dr. B. Keith Collins, DACVO & Dr. Heather Kaese, MS, DACVIM, DACVO
South County, California welcomes Dr. Paul Barrett, DACVO & Dr. Reuben Merideth, DACVO

Coming Soon

Avondale, AZ; San Diego, CA; Houston, TX

These new locations allow us to continue providing your communities with state of the art medicine and compassionate care.
Imperforate Lacrimal Punctum

Patient evaluation for Canine Eye Registration Foundation (CERF) examinations includes evaluation of anterior segment structures including eyelids, third eyelid, conjunctival tissues, cornea, and intraocular structures including the iris and lens, typically with a slit lamp biomicroscope to improve magnification. The posterior segment (retina and optic nerve) is also evaluated for inherited disease using binocular indirect ophthalmoscopy.

An array of diverse congenital abnormalities of the nasolacrimal system exist in many species, but are relatively rarely seen during a CERF examination. The most common condition we see is an imperforate lacrimal punctum. This condition is defined as a developmental anomaly resulting in failure of opening of the lacrimal duct located at the medial eyelid margins. This condition is most often seen in American Cocker Spaniels, Bedlington Terriers, Golden Retrievers, miniature and toy Poodles, and Samoyeds. The lower punctum is more frequently affected than the upper. This condition is most often characterized by epiphora and tear staining at the medial canthus, although very young animals may be asymptomatic until tear production increases with age. This condition may be discovered during a CERF examination as an absence of the opening of the nasolacrimal puncta and is confirmed when there is the inability to cannulate or place a probe in the punctal orifice. The inheritance of this condition is not fully defined and breeders are given the option as to whether or not they want to breed affected dogs since vision is not usually impaired with this condition and quality of life appears to be good.

Treatment for this condition usually involves excising the conjunctiva overlying the puncta and temporarily suturing in-dwelling fine catheters for 7-21 days. Using combination topical anti-inflammatory/antibiotic medications and keeping an e-collar on the patient may help to keep this new orifice open and prevent stricture as the conjunctival epithelium heals. In some cases obstructions of the nasolacrimal system are located in other parts of the nasolacrimal duct which may necessitate other diagnostic tests and may not be amenable to surgery.

In cats, the most common cause of nasolacrimal punctal obstruction is not congenital, but rather scarring of the puncta due to feline herpesvirus conjunctivitis and this condition may not be reversible.
MEMO TO MANAGERS

Will Consumer Spending On Pets Change In A Down Economy?!? Cost Containment Tips: How To Weather An Economic Downturn

Pet owners spend billions of dollars on their animal “kids” each year. In fact, a recent study by the American Pet Products Association projected consumer spending for 2008 at $43.4 billion – that’s up from $41.2 billion in 2007 and $38.4 billion the year before. Recent surveys also revealed that at least 25% ($10.8 billion) of all consumer pet spending is on veterinary care. At the moment, consumer spending on pet care remains strong; however some veterinary specialists are projecting and preparing for a slight decline.

Due diligence in managing the Practice is imperative during challenging economic times and weathering an economic slowdown in the months ahead is possible with proper planning. Here are some helpful cost containment tips to consider as we enter the New Year:

- Develop a corporate scorecard (benchmarks for best practices) to evaluate performance and drive improvements.
- Develop benchmarks for key cost components of running the Practice. Keep an eye on key cost components such as, inventories (drugs & supplies), lab fees, labor costs, payroll overhead, equipment, and so on. Monitor those expense percentages and keep them in line!
- Reduce staff hours when client appointments or production is down. Consider reducing the hours of both part-time and full-time employees. If your policy is such that full-time employees must work a minimum of 40 hours per week to qualify for benefits, consider updating your policy to allow 32 hours per week for full time status.
- Offer staggered shifts to cover those long days without overtime.
- Monitor, reduce, or eliminate overtime.
- Consolidate buying power. Negotiate deeper discounts when purchasing in volume/bulk. Renegotiate contractual terms and discounts with vendors.
- Outsourcing may result in cost savings! Utilize cost benefit analysis worksheets to help benchmark current costs and determine where cost savings can be achieved.
- Increase “safety” throughout the work place. Adopt workplace processes that reduce the likelihood of injuries or other related unnecessary expenses.
- Consider offering non-traditional work experiences such as work from home.
- Share space with other entities if/when appropriate.
- Automate processes to gain efficiencies. Automate processes/review current procedures for greater efficiency.
- Turn off office lights in the evening.
- Utilize applicable on-line learning to reduce training costs.

By implementing these cost containment tips you can help to reduce your Practice overhead and help ensure your financial stability. Careful planning and preparation is key to weathering an economic storm. Remember, responsible fiscal management equals great customer service!

Karen Webster, MBA
Chief Operations Officer
Eye Care for Animals