

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

EXTENSION DIVISION - VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY - BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 24061

VIRGINIA-MARYLAND  
REGIONAL COLLEGE  
OF  
VETERINARY MEDICINE

**VIRGINIA VETERINARY NOTES**



March 1981

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G. A. MacInnis  
Extension Specialist

## MEETINGS

Equine Nutrition and Physiology Society Symposium  
Airlie House, Warrenton, VA - April 29 - May 2, 1981.

For more information contact:

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Department of Animal Science  
Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Pet Dentistry for Veterinarians - Northern Virginia Community College  
Loudoun Campus - June 10-11, 1981.

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Dr. K. C. Roberts  
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Nutrition of Dogs and Cats - Mark L. Morris, DVM, PhD, Central Virginia VMA,  
A. H. Robins Building, Richmond, VA - April 23, 1981, 8 p.m.

## BETTER CLINICAL RECORDS

The current regulations of the Virginia Board of Veterinary Medicine require that a practicing veterinarian maintain a daily written record for a period of three years following the last patient visit. This requirement also applies to patients who die or are euthanized. The record must be in indelible ink.

This clinical record should reflect the progress of individual cases from the first visit until the time of discharge or death, and should detail history, signs, preliminary diagnosis, diagnostic methods and results, final diagnosis, and treatment regimen.

1. This record is of supreme importance in the event medico-legal questions are later raised about the handling of the case.
2. It is also vital in case of referrals, or when a client moves and wishes a copy for the information of the succeeding veterinarian.
3. In a multi-veterinarian practice, it is of course necessary for the use of associates who may become involved in the case.
4. Refills of prescriptions are facilitated if the record is clear on the drug, dosage, and administration of the medication.
5. If a client raises questions about charges, these can be answered if a complete record has been kept.

These are new requirements. They are mandated, and it is in our own interest as well as in the interest of the public we serve to strictly observe them. Looking ahead, these records could be used to compile statistics on the occurrence of various animal diseases, morbidity and mortality by breed or species, and other data which could be used in research, in clinical practice, by public and animal health authorities, and for general information. Our profession has been handicapped in this respect. Our medical colleagues have long been able to cite statistics on disease by the thousands of cases.

E. E. Thompson, DVM  
Salem, Virginia

#### LEGAL NOTES

A nonconforming animal hospital is one whose use does not agree with the zoning regulations applicable to the district in which the building is located. Invariably no structural alterations are permitted in the nonconforming animal hospital.

To those veterinarians owning a nonconforming building, a Texas court ruling has made a distinction as to what is "a structural alteration."

A San Antonio veterinarian was operating his animal clinic at the time the city enacted a zoning ordinance outlawing animal hospitals in the district. He was, however, permitted to continue his clinic on a nonconforming status.

Desirous of increasing his operation he moved one of his existing buildings 150 feet and joined it to another. Our veterinarian caused improvements to the inside of the moved building at the cost of \$15,000. The city objected, saying he had made structural alterations. And this was not permitted in a nonconforming building.

To the relief of the veterinarian, the court decisioned: "Improvement to the interior of a nonconforming building is not a structural alteration within the ordinance provision. The veterinarian is entitled to an occupancy permit for a veterinary clinic in the building."

Murray Loring, DVM, JD  
Williamsburg, Virginia

#### SUCCESS IS NO ACCIDENT

Have you taken a good hard look at your patient records recently? Are you still using 3" x 5" file cards written in pencil? Do you have individual record cards with lab results, diagnosis, and detailed treatments (including drugs and dosages) legibly written in indelible ink?

The time has long since past when veterinarians could expect to "get by" on their memories and hastily written notes on scraps of paper. Complete, individual patient records, kept up to date with symptoms, diagnostic test results, diagnosis, and treatments are not only a good idea in your practice - they are mandatory!

What do your patient records look like?

Kent C. Roberts, D.V.M.  
Companion Animal Extension Specialist

#### DOMESTIC FERRET

These small mammals are fastidious, easily trained, and naturally nocturnal. Ferrets are escape artists that require tight cages for confinement. They are members of the same family (Mustelidae) as skunks, weasels, and mink. A musk odor comes from paired glands at the base of the tail.

Male ferrets are "hobs" and females are called "jills." They have a normal life span of 5-9 years. Seasonally polyestrous from March to August, the female is an induced ovulator. Gestation averages 42 days and litters run 5 to 15 blind, hairless young. The female and her litter are best left alone and the male separated from them entirely. Weaning occurs at 3-4 weeks of age by which time their eyes should be open. Pseudo pregnancy does occur.

Ferrets are very susceptible to canine distemper but probably not to feline distemper. Use of a killed distemper vaccine is recommended. Beware of ferret derived vaccines. Ten weeks of age is a good time to vaccinate. Ferrets are subject to rabies, Botulism (type C), and human flu. Staph and strep abscesses, ear mites, urinary calculi and sarcoptic mange can also be problems.

Ferrets resemble, and are best treated like cats. Use drugs and doses recommended for cats. Halothane (mask) and Ketamine/acepromazine (10:1) are satisfactory for surgery such as spaying, castration, or descenting.

Most dog and cat foods, both dry and canned, provide adequate nutrition for ferrets. Mice and baby chicken are preferred diet items. They are good mousers but will kill chickens if permitted the opportunity.

Stuart L. Porter, VMD  
Small Mammal Management Short Course  
Blue Ridge Community College  
November 1980

#### RABBIT POTENTIAL

The domestic rabbit has the potential to become one of the world's most important livestock species because, "from a given amount of

forage resources, we can produce a lot more meat with rabbits than from beef or sheep," according to Peter R. Cheeke, professor of animal science at Oregon State University, Corvallis.

The only trouble, says Cheeke, is that at the present, the rabbit is probably at the bottom of the list in economic productivity. That's because of the high labor requirements of rabbit production.

Cheeke is director of research for the Oregon State Rabbit Research Institute, the only facility of its kind in the United States. One of Cheeke's major goals is to reduce labor requirements in feeding, caging, care and cleaning of the animals. Cheeke is studying the feasibility of rabbit "feedlots" and says the French are developing a "harem" system which may eliminate the standard practice of hand mating.

Cheeke lists seven advantages rabbits have over other meat producers.

- Rabbits can be fed high-forage, low-grain diets that are not competitive with human food needs. OSU studies show that grains can be almost totally omitted from rabbit rations with no decrease in productivity.

- Rabbits can utilize forage protein more efficiently than other livestock. From an acre of alfalfa, at least five times as much meat can be produced when the alfalfa is fed to rabbits than when it is fed to beef cattle.

- Rabbits have the potential of being in constant state of reproduction. Unlike any other type of livestock, rabbits can be bred back on the day that they give birth.

- Rabbits have a high growth rate. They can reach market weight in eight weeks, a growth rate comparable to broiler chickens'.

- Rabbits exhibit a high feed efficiency. They can make a pound of weight gain on from 2½ to 3½ pounds of feed.

- There is a high degree of genetic diversity in rabbits, both within and between breeds. This enhances the opportunities in breeding programs to get desired growth and fertility rates, resistance to disease and heat, and milk production.

- Rabbit meat is a high-protein, low-fat, low-cholesterol and low-sodium product well suited to the human diet.

Animal Nutrition and Health  
January - February 1981

#### VARIABLES IN VACCINATING SWINE FOR ATROPHIC RHINITIS

The inconvenience of having to round-up pregnant sows twice during the latter part of the gestation period in order to administer atrophic

rhinitis bacterin has prompted producers to ask what would happen if they did not vaccinate the sows but vaccinated the pigs. A recent news release from Norden Laboratories gives some answers. Four groups of rhinitis susceptible, SPF animals were treated as indicated in the following table (using Norden's "Rhinobac") and then challenged with virulent Bordetella bronchiseptica cultures. Here are the results:

'RHINOAC' CHALLENGE RESULTS

<u>Test Group</u>	<u>Incidence of Turbinate Atrophy</u>
Nonvaccinated Pigs from Nonvaccinated Sows	96%
Nonvaccinated Pigs from Vaccinated Sows	60%
Vaccinated Pigs from Nonvaccinated Sows	39%
Vaccinated Pigs from Vaccinated Sows	20%

Obviously it pays to vaccinate sows as well as pigs although there is some benefit when only the pigs are vaccinated.

The earlier in life that baby pigs become infected with Bordetella bronchiseptica the greater the turbinate atrophy. Because of this producers may be tempted to vaccinate pigs earlier than 7 days of age in order to induce earlier immunity. However, the 7 day vaccination is critical to effective immunity. If the bacterin is given earlier than 7 days, satisfactory immunity does not develop. The timing of the second dose for pigs apparently can be anytime between 2 and 4 weeks of age.

APHIS CHIEF REPORTS

Dr. Harry Mussman, administrator of APHIS, reported on a number of disease programs during an appearance before the Animal Health Committee at the National Cattlemen's Association annual meeting. His comments included:

Screwworms--The northern tier of states in Mexico is essentially free of screwworms and the barrier is being moved well south in Mexico. The 1984 target for moving the barrier to southern Mexico may be improved upon. Other Central American countries are interested in moving it even farther south.

Brucellosis - The momentum of the new program is so great, efforts are so successful and states are cooperating so well, funds available to USDA won't permit filling all the requests being received. (There was discussion of the need for asking for additional funding for the program in the near future.)

Bluetongue - The survey to determine the incidence will permit advising European countries where they can obtain free animals. There is little or no disease in the northern states. The EEC will be asked to accept animals from free herds, but this may have a possible serious spinoff, since the U.S. has considered an entire country infected when a disease exists in the country and European countries have taken the same position. If we now ask other countries to accept a "disease-free zone" concept, we'll receive requests for the same consideration from others.

Darien Gap - Columbia is pushing for completion of the Pan-American Highway, the only uncompleted portion of which is through Panama and Columbia. That gap serves as an effective barrier to transmission of foot and mouth disease to Central and North America. USDA has successfully opposed U.S. participation in funding completion of the highway. Columbia, in a move which is politically inspired, may take action to complete the highway to the Panama border, but that would still leave a gap through Panama. Apparently Columbia has the resources to build a road for 4-wheel drive vehicles within the next few years. Mussman speculated that Panama may continue to hold out. Another factor in the situation is that vaccination for foot and mouth is being phased out in Europe, which will prompt more severe restrictions on beef imports. In response, Columbia and Argentina are improving their FMD vaccines.

Animal Welfare - It's inevitable that the industry must seriously review some confinement practices to determine if changes would improve efficiency. The industry also must tell the story of how production technology evolved and the advantages to consumers. USDA is willing to help with this PR job, but industry must take the lead.

African swine fever - Haiti finally in December requested aid from the U.S. which triggered a reaction by APHIS and the declaration of emergency, which will make CCC funds available for an eradication effort. This marks the first time in 30 years that an emergency has been declared for a disease that did not exist in the U.S. The last time was for FMD in Mexico. Both Mexico and Canada have indicated interest and have committed people and funds. APHIS hopes to have people in Haiti within a few weeks to begin helping in the eradication effort.

Exotic Diseases - "My travels have convinced me that people are moving too easily and carrying too many things for the U.S. to be very complacent about keeping exotic diseases out. A critical review is being conducted of inspection programs for international travelers and our emergency programs organization and by early summer we hope to know where we stand and what changes are needed."

International involvement - Greater international involvement by APHIS would provide these advantages: (1) diseases can be dealt with while they are still outside the country; (2) personnel can develop experience with diseases we don't have (of the 10 major diseases in the world, only one, Newcastle, is a problem in the U.S. and then

only intermittently when brought back in); (3) export markets can be enhanced; (4) agricultural productivity of undeveloped countries can be improved, which may be as important as foreign aid. APHIS is putting representatives in various areas around the world.

Livestock Conservation Institute  
Newsletter  
February 1981

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