

VETERINARY PRACTICE NEWS

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AT DEADLINE

■ Switzerland-based **Datamars**, a developer of radio frequency identification technology, has awarded **Bayer Animal Health U.S.** distribution rights for its ISO-approved microchips and scanners for companion animals and horses. Bayer anticipates the launch to begin in the fall.

■ The **U.S. Department of Agriculture's** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will hold a public meeting May 10 in San Diego to discuss using microchips to identify animals covered under the Animal Welfare Act. For details, visit www.aphis.usda.gov.

■ **Schering-Plough Animal Health Corp.** is designating May "HomeAgain Chip Your Pet Month." Veterinarians can contact the company for an event kit, which includes information, ideas and materials to plan a microchipping clinic. For details, visit www.homeagainid.com/vets.

■ The **Texas Animal Health Commission's** May meeting to address proposed regulations for premises registration has been placed on hold. Commissioners will not consider the issue until 2007, said Bob Hillman, DVM, Texas' state veterinarian and TAHC executive director.

■ **Ferrets Anonymous** of San Diego has launched www.legalize-ferrets.org, a website to promote the California Legalization Initiative for Ferrets. The initiative will be filed with the Secretary of State's office when the goal of 3,000 supporters is reached.

Lasers Blazing to Prominence



Veterinary laser surgery has come a long way since emerging two decades ago. We explore recent innovations, starting on Page 4.

Most Accept Specialists' Plan for Treatment

By **Brian Hutchins**
Veterinary Practice News

Four out of five specialty-practice clients fully accepted the specialists' treatment recommendations, according to preliminary results of a study of specialty-practice financial benchmarks.

By comparison, 14 percent of clients accepted a "scaled-back" treatment plan and 6 percent opted for euthanasia or otherwise declined the specialists' recommendation.

The study also noted that 77 percent of specialists' transactions came from an external referral and 8 percent came from internal referrals, that is, other specialists or general *Specialists*, Page 45

Man With a Mission

Mark Morris pioneered care, nutrition and a charitable foundation for small animals.

By **Mark Cantrell**
For Veterinary Practice News

Mark Morris never set out to be a revolutionary.

In fact, in the fall of 1920 the farm-boy-turned-collegian had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. But a chance encounter on campus would change all that—and transform the face of veterinary medicine forever.

As a junior at Colorado A&M, Morris gravitated to agricultural studies because of his rural background, but soon began to feel



Mark Morris felt that animals' lives could be improved with better diets and diagnostic methods.

unfulfilled in the discipline.

He poured out his worries and frustration to a friend who happened *Morris*, Page 8

TPLO Surgery Unproved?

Cruciate-ligament repairs are the most common surgical procedures for injured or diseased dogs, and the number of dog knees undergoing this surgery in the United States is estimated at more than 1.2 million a year.

This is five times the number of similar procedures performed in humans, The Wall Street Journal said recently in a report on the procedure.

Many veterinarians believe that tibial plateau leveling osteotomy, a relatively new technique, offers a faster and fuller recovery from a ruptured cruciate ligament. But some veterinarians avoid the pro-

cedure because there is a lack of published proof, the Journal reported.

Gail Smith, VMD, Ph.D., chairman of the department of clinical research at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, told The Wall Street Journal that TPLO is "a fashionable procedure."

When Veterinary Practice News spoke to Dr. Smith, he said that TPLO surgery is more expensive, more invasive and that research does not show it has a better outcome.

"That's the question I pose to *TPLO*, Page 2

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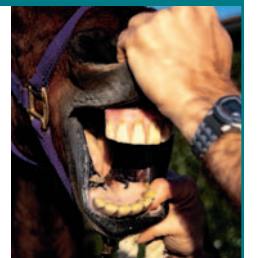
Graduates Grapple With Student Debt

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Equine Dental Care Requires Expert Hands

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Growth of Laser Technology Has Industry Beaming

By **Dennis Arp**
For Veterinary Practice News

Lasers have blazed to a position of prominence among Peter Eeg's veterinary surgical tools, but he still has a use for his good old blade scalpel.

Two uses, actually:

For skin scrapings and to tighten the tiny screws on other pieces of equipment.

"In practices like mine, the truth is that lasers have all but replaced the scalpel for surgical uses," says Eeg, DVM, director and owner of Poolesville Veterinary Clinic in Poolesville, Md., and executive vice president of the Veterinary Surgical Laser Society.

Lasers have come a long way in the more than two decades since they first emerged and had to overcome skepticism among medical professionals.

The latest estimate puts lasers in more than 3,500 U.S. veterinary practices, up from 2,000 three years ago and less than 500 in 2001, industry sources say.

Lumenis' AccuVet division, the nation's top seller of veterinary lasers and equipment, says about 10 percent to 15 percent of North American practices now perform laser surgery.

That growth has brought new options for veterinarians and their clients.

Word is Spreading

"If you walk through an exhibit hall at any of the major meetings, instead of just one booth there are now five or six companies that sell laser technology," says Kenneth E. Bartels, DVM, MS, McCasland Professor of Laser Surgery at Oklahoma State University College of Veteri-

The latest estimate puts lasers in more than 3,500 U.S. veterinary practices, up from 2,000 three years ago and less than 500 in 2001, industry sources say.

nary Medicine.

The basic technology of laser surgery has changed little over the years, industry experts agree. A focused beam of light vaporizes the water in tissue, "cutting" in ways that a scalpel can't.

What's new is the range of delivery systems offered by a variety of vendors, further expanding the menu of medical procedures that benefit from lasers.

"As each day passes, veterinari-

ans find new and improved ways to use carbon dioxide lasers," says Carl Bennett, director of sales and marketing for Aesculight, of Woodinville, Wash., a company that sells lasers and accessories.

Innovations

Among the advances in recent years is a new generation of flexible waveguides, which veterinary surgeons praise for improving their dexterity and for allowing energy

to be delivered over otoscopes and short, rigid endoscopes.

Now surgeons can perform rectal and vaginal procedures as well as those in the throat that "they never would have dreamed of doing several years ago," Bennett says.

Newer extended laser surgical tips—both curved and straight—allow surgeons to perform soft palate resections, drain the middle ear and get to polyps in ear canals, adds George Peavy, DVM, dipl., ABVP.

Peavy is director of medical free electron laser and comparative medicine programs at the Beckman Laser Institute and Medical Clinic School of Medicine, University of California—Irvine.

For veterinarians who use carbon dioxide lasers, the choice is often

Cont, Page 6

2007 European Conference Set

The Southern European Veterinary Conference will aim to bring new continuing education opportunities to southern Europe, according to the North American Veterinary Conference.

The NAVC allied with the Spanish Small Animal Veterinary Assn. to further its focus on providing resources to the international market.

Scheduled for Oct. 19-21, 2007, in Barcelona, Spain, the conference will

feature teaching seminars, hands-on workshops and interactive small-group sessions for companion animal, exotic and equine practitioners.

European veterinarians will be the primary audience, and specialty groups, European associations and colleges will be invited to hold their own meetings in conjunction with the SEVC.

For more information, e-mail jaragones@avepa.org.

Cornell CVM Dean Steps Down

Donald Smith, DVM, dean of Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, is stepping down after 10 years. He plans to return focusing on the relationship of companion animals in family structure in America.

While dean, Smith established three academic priorities in biomedical research: clinical and diagnostic sciences in infectious disease; cancer biology and oncology; and

mammalian genomics.

"Under Dean Smith's leadership, the college has not only sustained its leadership in clinical research, education and patient care, but has become a major force in the university-wide initiative to enhance Cornell's research in the new life science," Provost Carolyn Martin said.

Martin will begin recruiting a new dean later this spring.

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-Kenneth E. Sullins, DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVS, Professor of Surgery, Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center

"The DiodeVET 980nm Laser is small, portable and very user friendly to use as a contact mode for equine upper respiratory Transendoscopic Laser procedures."

-Lloyd Patrick Tatae, JR., V.M.D., College of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Clinical Sciences

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between flexible fiber and articulated arm delivery systems. The articulated arm uses mirrors to deliver a focused, collimated beam of energy.

"We leave the choice to customers because it's usually a matter of what they're more comfortable with," says Peter Vitruk, one of the founders and owners of Aesculight and of Luxarcare, also of Woodinville, Wash., which services Luxar laser systems.

Plume Evacuation

Comfort, convenience and cost savings were behind the development of one of a growing number of accessories available to veterinarians. It's a device that fits into a surgical handpiece and evacuates the smoke the laser creates.

All laser surgery requires plume evacuation, and with human surgery, a nurse typically holds the device.

"That doesn't make financial sense for a veterinarian," says Paul Diaz, co-owner of Aesculight and Luxarcare. "This accessory brings the hose to within a half-inch of where the doctor is performing surgery."

Japan-based Asuka Laser Systems last year launched a U.S. operation and offers a variety of diode laser accessories. Included is a chisel-type handpiece for tissue dissection and coagulation and a forceps-type laser dissector that seals vessels so no sutures are needed.



With laser technology, a focused beam of light vaporizes the water in tissue, "cutting" in ways that a scalpel can't.

Adding new accessories can be a significant drain on practice resources. Though increased competition is likely to help mitigate costs, it still takes an investment of tens of thousands of dollars to buy and maintain laser

equipment.

Nevertheless, "A laser system used by a competent practice will become a profit center, even at today's prices," Peavy says. "We're not talking here about increasing the number of cases you see in a

day, but we are talking about client acceptance of an added fee for the technology."

Surgical Advantages

One of the procedures that's driven most by client demand is feline

declawing.

"As cat owners, we feel guilty about that procedure, and we should," Bennett says. "Laser surgery so dramatically improves patient outcomes that clients seek out veterinarians who have CO₂ lasers."

Peavy says he used to be skeptical about claims of reduced pain and faster recovery times.

"Observing cats after the procedure has made a believer out of me," he says.

"I've seen cats get up and walk immediately after waking up from anesthesia. And they are able to bear weight on their feet without hesitation."

Laser Education

Education in the proper uses of laser surgical equipment has also advanced, industry experts say. Universities, the American Veterinary Medical Assn. and the American Animal Hospital Assn. all offer lecture and/or lab opportunities, and the Veterinary Surgical Laser Society recently administered its first laser-certification exam.

"I'd still like to see a lot more opportunities for in-depth courses," Peavy says.

Looking ahead, Eeg expects to see lasers applied more for photodynamic therapy—a targeted cancer treatment—and for low-level
Laser, Page 7

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Pidgeon to Join Western Vet After 10 Years at AMC

Guy Pidgeon, DVM, president and chief executive officer of The Animal Medical Center in New York City, will leave AMC this month to become assistant executive director of the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas.

Dr. Pidgeon will also act as project manager in overseeing the development of the conference's new adult learning center, to be located at its headquarters.

The 60,000 square-foot building will feature multi-purpose laboratories, surgery and dental suites and an auditorium. There will also be a barn and stalls for horses, cows and small ruminants. Groundbreaking has yet to take place.

Pidgeon has overseen The Animal Medical Center for 10 years and hopes to create a smooth transition to new leadership.

"I have had 10 wonderful years at AMC," Pidgeon says. "Programs are strong, the endowment has more than doubled. ... I have accomplished many of my goals.

"There's a time to make your mark and then [a time] to pass the reins on to someone else," he says. "This will be a rekindling experience with new challenges to come."

PHARMACEUTICAL BRIEFS

■ **Merial** will continue producing Purevax Ferret Distemper Vaccine, currently the only USDA-approved canine distemper vaccine for use in ferrets. Shawn Hooker, Merial's associate director of vaccines, said the company has no plans to discontinue production of the vaccine, which is also used for black-footed ferrets and pandas.

■ The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** has approved changes to the safety labeling of **Schering-Plough Animal Health Corp's** Orbax (orbifloxacin) tablets for management of certain bacterial diseases in dogs and cats. The new label includes post-approval adverse drug experience information and fluoroquinolone-class statements

regarding retinal toxicity in cats. Through March 9, blindness was seen as possibly caused by orbifloxacin use in cats in 11 of 79 adverse drug events evaluated by the FDA.

■ The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** has approved **Cross Vetpharm Group's** Flunixin Injectable Solution, a generic version of **Schering-Plough Animal Health's** Banamine Solution for the control of inflammation in horses and cattle.

■ The **Food and Drug Administration** has issued an order prohibiting the extra-label use of anti-influenza adamantine and neuraminidase inhibitor drugs in chickens, turkeys and ducks. The issue is based on evidence that extra-label use would be likely to cause an adverse event in humans.

The rule becomes effective June 20. Comments may be made until May 22 at www.fda.gov/dockets/ecomments.

Patent Awarded For New Med Delivery System

Apothecus Pharmaceutical Corp. of Oyster Bay, N.Y., has received a patent for a new animal medication delivery system using dissolvable film.

This new system will be effective for dogs, cats, bovine, equine and other large animals, said Daniel Leon, president of Apothecus.

"We can deliver a range of medications and antibiotics in a form that is effective, easy to administer and comfortable for the animal,"

Leon said.

After the film is placed in on the animal's tongue, the film becomes tacky and adheres to the inside of the oral cavity. Medication is then absorbed through the buccal membrane without having to pass through the animal's digestive system.

The company plans to pursue licensing of the delivery process to drug companies with distribution lines in the veterinary industry.

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laser therapy to increase vascularity and reduce inflammation.

Future Projections

Meanwhile, Bennett foresees increased use of holmium: YAG lasers to send pulses to break up bladder stones noninvasively.

AccuVet, of Santa Clara, Calif., has been partnering with the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine to sponsor laboratory workshops in this laser lithotripsy procedure.

AccuVet has also provided equipment for an advanced course

"Veterinarians who already have lasers are looking to use them in more advanced ways."


at the University of California-Davis, on laser repair of anterior cruciate ligament injuries.

"Veterinarians who already have lasers are looking to use them in more advanced ways," says Lora Varnelis, global marketing manager for AccuVet.

Still, maybe it's not time to discard those blade scalpels just yet.

"I've been called by someone who was having a problem with a laser, and he asked, 'What do I do while it's being repaired?'" Diaz says. "I told him, 'You have to go back to a scalpel.'"

The veterinarian's response?

"I don't have one anymore." 



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