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September Digital Issue 2016

# A Warm le come

**Investing** in behavior with both products and staff training pays dividends for **VC** Member Lake Mills **Vet Clinic** 



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# Mark Your Calendars

By Peter Hartman, Chairman of the Board of Directors, TVC



#### **NAVC Information:**

- February 4 8
- Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla.
- Use Discount Code: 2017TVCDISCOUNT
- More details to come on meeting times and location for TVC event.

#### The North American Veterinary Conference

is a big deal for the animal health industry. Last year there were more than 17,000 industry stakeholders in attendance, including 7,000+ veterinarians and 1,600+ veterinary technicians. For 2017 you can expect to see thousands of CE credit hours to choose from, networking and introductions of innovative products and services.

You'll also see your fellow The Veterinary Cooperative Members in attendance. The NAVC gives us a perfect place to meet together for our annual meeting.

The 2017 conference, scheduled for Feb 4-8 in Orlando, Fla., is fast approaching. Registration is already open. If you're still undecided as to whether you'll be attending the upcoming NAVC, here are some reasons you should:

**The people.** Attending NAVC and the annual TVC meeting is your best chance for face-to-face networking with your peers. Whatever region you are from, the NAVC is the best show in the country, and offers more than a state show could. You'll be able to meet executives and key members of our vendor partners. Talking and networking with other veterinary practice owners is great for your business.

**Financial (and fun) incentives.** We have a discount for you to attend (see the sidebar). You'll have a chance to win raffle prizes, and door prizes (Last year valued at ~\$5,000). Plus, a lot of veterinarians with families like to use NAVC to incorporate a vacation. The weather will be nice in Florida in February to accommodate the family time.

**Meet the TVC staff.** We're working hard to put together successful vendor programs and initiatives to help your business thrive. By attending the annual meeting you can make your voice heard to let us know what you think TVC should be doing.



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### 2017 ANNUAL MEETING FEBRUARY 4TH | ORLANDO

TVC's Annual Meeting will be hosted in conjunction with NAVC 2017! This exciting meeting will be 1 hour long, with a fun 1 hour social/cocktail hour to follow. It will most likely be hosted on Saturday, February 4, 2017 at the Rosen Center Hotel. Look for confirmation of place and time in October/November.

#### **NAVC Discount**

TVC members get a special 10% discount for NAVC registration for being a TVC member. <u>More info here</u>

#### **Promotions**



#### **News From Hills**

- September Buy One Get One A 1 X ONLY Offer. Purchase ANY Healthy Advantage Diets products, get the second for FREE! <u>Click here to download the order form</u>
- Wellness Promotion 20% off ALL Science Diet products + 30% off all Hill's Ideal Balance products. Important: Promotion only available over the phone, (no fax, email or distributor orders) Call 1-800-354-4557 and mention you're doing the "TVC Wellness Offer" in order to get these discounts. Click here for terms and more information

#### Webinars



#### **Tuesday October 4th - Stress Management For Pets**

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Today, the Ceva pheromone products offer is scientifically proven with 42 published clinical studies with Feliway or Adaptil (in 2014) and is supported by world-renowned behavioral experts including leading veterinarian universities, practitioners and specialists.

Join us October 4, 2016, at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. (Central) to learn how to use Feliway and Adaptil as part of your clinic's Fear Free<sup>SM</sup> protocol, and how you can create an excellent client experience that will keep them coming back. Attendees at either session will receive 2 Feliway 20ml sprays, and 2 Adaptil 20ml sprays just for attending!

Signup at http://www.tvc.coop/webinars

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# A Varm Velome

Investing in behavior with both products and staff training pays dividends for TVC Member Lake Mills Vet Clinic

Mittsy Voiles speaks to a group of students about the science of animal behavior.

#### One of the main challenges in veterinary

medicine is the perception of whether patients can tell caregivers what's wrong with them, says TVC Member Mittsy Voiles, B.A., CPDT-KA, Behavioral Specialist at Lake Mills Vet Clinic in Wisconsin.

Voiles believes patients can indeed communicate with their caregivers. "It's just a matter of being able to understand them when they are trying to tell us things," she says. "It's difficult if you don't know what to look for. If you know how to read your patient's body language and incorporate that, besides just the ability to help them be less stressed and fearful, it also contributes strongly to doing your job much better. Without that skill you would have only half the information."

Addressing pet behavior and creating a stress-free visit are key components of Lake Mills Vet Clinic's approach to veterinary medicine. The clinic has several behavioral trainers on staff, invests in office design changes for a more comfortable experience for the patient, and both regularly uses and promotes pheromone products such as Ceva Animal Health's Adaptil<sup>®</sup> and Feliway<sup>®</sup>.

Some of their techniques may seem unique in the field. In the past, veterinary clinics often looked outside their office for behavior training and solutions. "It's always been a separate field, a specialized area of interest, much like advanced dentistry or other kinds of specialties," says Voiles. "It hasn't been strongly incorporated."

However, that perception is changing, especially within the last three to four years. "There is still a long way to go, but practices are starting to understand it's important. And practices that see that it's important, they are trying to figure out how to incorporate that into an existing practice with things like schedules and the structure of the building to be considered."

Voiles offered several suggestions for other clinics who wish to successfully integrate behavioral training and products into their clinical approach.

#### **Treats**

Treats can help improve the patient experience, if done correctly. "You can't underestimate the benefits of food when working with patients," Voiles says.

Treats in the exam room can be used to destress patients from procedures like blood draws or vaccinations, she says. "We pay a lot of attention in the timing of the treats. We pay attention to see if the patient is adequately distracted by the treat. If so, then we might attempt to give a vaccine, but if we are giving treats and the patient

appears to be aware of what we are doing and looks back at us, then we won't necessarily try to use food as a distraction. We run the risk of the patient thinking the food causes the vaccinations. We pay close attention to that."

#### **Pheromones**

Many animals respond positively to pheromone products, Voiles says. "Even if it's just 65 percent of your patients that respond to the pheromone products – that is a huge percentage of patients who are going to have lower stress levels in the clinic, therefore you have a patient who is easier to work with."



Voiles says the clinic recommends pheromone products to pet owners for use with nervous patients before they arrive at the clinic. The clinic runs Ceva's Adaptil through diffusers in classrooms for indoor dog training classes and sprays mats with Adaptil for the pet students doing outdoor lessons. "We also have bottles in exam rooms," she says. "We either have diffusers or sprays. We spray because we use a lot of fabric in our clinic and it gives us an opportunity to use Adaptil and Feliway on those fabrics. We use it on blankets on tables and floors."

They also use Adaptil and Feliway on towels that are incorporated into light restraint methods the clinic has trained staff on. "We have calmer patients with radiographs and blood draws because they are securely bundled, but are not having parts of their body grabbed onto by people they don't know, and are not able to move around and hurt themselves."

#### A Warm Welcome

#### Surfaces

Voiles says they look at the surfaces within the clinic from the perspective of the patient. For instance, older dogs may walk across a tile floor and because they aren't able to walk across it with a lot of traction "those patients are essentially walking across black ice as far as they are concerned," she says.

The lobby floor, scales and exam tables can all be scary experiences for patients, just from the perspective of the surface. Lake Mills Vet Clinic invested in non-skid mats in a lot of areas, non-skid memory foam bath matts for tables, and fleece blankets so patients are comfortable and warm and have traction.





Clinic owner Dr. Bill Stork is a published author. His book "In Herriot's Shadow" was featured on Wisconsin Public Radio's The Kathleen Dunn Show last year



#### **Visits**

Voiles says they've expanded to include social visits to the clinic. They encourage pet owners to bring dogs and cats in when they are not scheduled for an appointment so they have visits to the clinic that don't involve anything invasive, just treats for coming in or maybe getting on a scale or table. "We've expanded that for training on car rides for cats and dogs, how owners can make those situations less stressful so that they can pay attention to the stress level from the time the patient leaves home, to when they come into our clinic to work with us and go home again."

Often the training happens over the phone as people make appointments. Lake Mills Vet Clinic staff will ask how

The results speak for themselves. Reviews of the clinic on social media often point specifically to how well they thought their pet was being handled. their dog or cat does at the vet clinic, and then will give the pet owners advice on what they might try to lower stress levels. "If they don't need an emergency appointment, we schedule them a week out and have social visits to the clinic so they get to come in and get treats and then go home before they have to come in for anything in particu-

lar," she says. "If we have a patient who is particularly worried about car rides, we will do a private lesson in home. We also have brochures that help talk pet owners through process of conditioning animals to be OK with car rides and going into a carrier, things of that nature."

The results speak for themselves. Reviews of the clinic on social media often point specifically to how well they thought their pet was being handled. Plus, it's a safer working environment for staff. The clinic's patients are generally not fractious. Ten years ago, the clinic had maybe 10-20 of dog and cat patients that were considered fractious and impossible to handle. Today, with the behavior training and emphasis, there are only a handful of patients where they have to use caution, Voiles says. "They get the same level of care, we're just more careful with them."

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# Managing Online Reviews

By Patrick T. Malone



#### Businesses are always

looking for ways to stand out in today's marketplace. I believe one of the ways that hospitals can stand above their competitors is by managing online reviews.

Start by doing a search for "Veterinary hospitals in your City, State" on Google. I recommend Google because it is the most widely used search engine but you can also try the same search on Yelp or other search engines. Your hospital should appear along with a number of reviews.

If there are no reviews, or the last review is more than 6 months old, there is a tremendous opportunity for you to consider the impact of social media, search engines, the Internet and to start asking clients to post a review of your business. Today, most people use the Internet to search, and if your hospital isn't there and getting positive reviews, you may be dismissed in the mind of that potential customer.

If there are positive reviews, they should be followed, within a week, by an acknowledgement from the practice thanking that client for their review. Something like, "Thank you for your kind words about Malone Veterinary Hospital. My staff and I attempt to do what's best for our customers and we are always encouraged when we meet and exceed your expectations."

If there are negative reviews, they should also receive a response but within 48 hours. Let me demonstrate how I believe these negative reviews should NOT be handled.







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### **Battle the bite!**

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### The negative review is not going away. The real objective is to minimize its impact.

**Example:** A Veterinary Hospital owner, treating a cat with a chronic illness, recommended an abdominal ultrasound. The client took the cat to another clinic down the street, where they did the ultrasound. The cat ended up being euthanized; and the client posted a bad review for the original hospital owner. The practice owner replied, pointing out that they recommended the ultrasound. The cat owner replied with another bad review, and got all her friends to post bad reviews.

Clearly the practice owner's response only inflamed the situation. It became one of those "If I can prove my point (we recommended an ultrasound) will you drop yours." The practice owner's response was very logical, but the reviewer was running on pure emotion.

The negative review is not going away. The real objective is to minimize its impact. So a better response might have included empathy and acknowledgement of the customer's point of view without agreeing with that point of view. The following example illustrates both empathy and an acknowledgement of the reviewer's point of view without agreeing with the review:

"I was sorry to hear that (cat's name) was euthanized. These situations are difficult for everyone involved. I was



pleased to hear that you followed our recommendation of an ultrasound. Finally, but most importantly, I apologize that our service did not meet your expectations as we strive to deliver the best medical care to all our patients and the best service for their owners."

The reality of today's business climate is that businesses are not going to satisfy the expectations of every potential customer. Bad reviews are part of doing business and are out of the business owner's control. What can be controlled is how those few bad reviews are handled.

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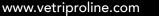
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# Industry NEWS



#### Janet Donlin, DVM, named AVMA executive VP/CE0

The head of the AVMA Professional Liability Insurance Trust (AVMA PLIT) has been hired as the day-to-day leader of the American Veterinary Medical Association, according to Veterinary Practice News. Janet Donlin, DVM, CAE, will replace Ron DeHaven, DVM, MBA, as executive vice president and CEO of the 88,000-member organization Sept. 12. Dr. DeHaven is retiring after nine years in the post. The decision came days after the AVMA House of Delegates amended a bylaw so the position of executive vice president or assistant executive vice president may be filled someday by a non-veterinarian. The change was proposed by the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association with the intent of opening the door to the most qualified candidates available. Donlin has experience on AVMA's executive level. She started with the organization in 1991 as assistant director of the Scientific Activities Division and later served as assistant executive vice president as well as interim division director and associate executive vice president. She also was interim CEO of the National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues and for nearly six years was employed as a chief veterinary officer at Hill's Pet Nutrition. As CEO of AVMA PLIT for just over three years, Donlin managed the business operations of a trust that sells insurance products to veterinarians, students and practices.

### Partners for Healthy Pets develops preventive healthcare plan manual for practices

According to AAHA NEWSTat, Partners for Healthy Pets (PHP), an alliance of 100+ veterinary associations, veterinary colleges, and animal health companies focused on preventive care led by AAHA and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), has developed an easy-to-understand, step-by-step process for understanding the nuts and bolts of implementing a preventive healthcare program in a veterinary practice. This free, <u>downloadable</u> manual, Preventive Healthcare Plan Overview, explains what preventive healthcare plans are, how they work, and what it takes to implement them. It also outlines the logic of preventive healthcare – clients want it – and how practices can implement payment plans to make preventive healthcare affordable for their clients.

### The impact of caring for sick pets and grieving pet owners

People who work in animal shelters or veterinary clinics are at high risk of compassion fatigue, a sustained stress that takes a toll on a caregiver's mind and body – and her heart, according to a recent NPR report. It can morph into many forms: Some feel guilt or apathy, others turn to substance abuse. Little data exists, but research suggests veterinarian suicide rates are some of the highest in the medical field, and a 2014 study of about 10,000 veterinarians found twice as much "severe psychological distress" in them than in the general public. One 1 in 6 veterinary school graduates say they have considered suicide. To read the full article, visit <u>www.npr.org/sections/healthshots/2016/08/06/488248402/for-vets-caring-for-sick-pets-</u> and-grieving-owners-takes-a-toll

#### Lyme vaccine update

TVC has heard from sources in the industry that Merck is having a backorder on their Lyme vaccine, and that it could be through early next year. TVC encourages members to check out the BIVI Lyme products as a possible replacement.