

TVC

Magazine

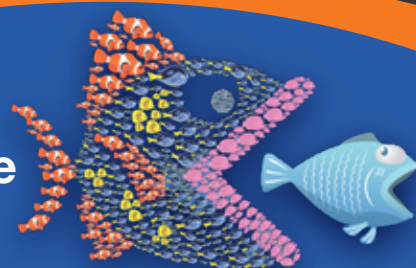
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4,000 clinics' insight to veterinary medicine and profitability

As the year comes to a close, let us look back. What have you experienced? Growth? Decline? For many, this may be measured in the medical victories that you have won. At TVC however, we believe that practicing the best medicine is one half of running a healthy practice. We believe that the best medicine and good business go hand in hand. TVC's Co-op Owners cooperate by sharing with us their best practices. TVC evaluates what is working, and what is not, at clinics across the U.S., and provides the best of the best so all TVC clinics will thrive while providing best medicine in today's difficult business environment.

In this magazine, we will discuss healthy business practices that demystify successful inventory management, how to compete with online sales, demographics that the average practice may overlook, and many other topics. We have organized them into three segments: "Client Management and Engagement", where you can find how to handle the most volatile factor in any clinic's equation, the client; "Best Practice Medicine", where TVC Co-op Owners will share the medical practices that help their clinic thrive; and lastly "Your Clinic as a Business," where we will guide you through the changing times, leading you to tips for profitability.



When you see this logo, it is in reference to a TVC clinic being featured, that has expressed excellence in their best practices

CLIENT MANAGEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

A Click Away

pg7

Have your sales slumped due to internet sales? How can you play the game profitably, and stop further lost sales? TVC Co-op Owner Dr. Beddoe tells us how she is being successful.

How Practices Can Prepare for the Millennial Invasion

pg11

Are you ignoring the primary pet-owning demographic in the U.S.? Find out how the millennial client base may be different from the customers you already know, and how to ensure getting your share of this growing pet client base.

Getting Your Walletshare

pg14

Let us guide you in capturing more of the pet spend of your clients at your clinic.

Why Forward Booking is the Best

Strategy for Veterinary Practices in 2019

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Are you not booking forward? Find out the importance of ensuring your patients' next visit, before they even walk out of your door.

BEST PRACTICE MEDICINE

Nothing to Sneeze At

pg23

Let TVC Best Practice Co-op Owners show you a means to a better life for the patient, a happier client, and a boon to your bottom line, through specialty testing, such as the often overlooked, allergy testing and treatment.

TVC Resources

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Tools to level the playing field and thrive.

Become the Go-to Cutting Edge Clinic

pg31

Best Practice TVC Co-op Owner Dr. Lautzenhiser shares how she turned her clinic into the "go to" clinic in her community.

Proactive Approach to Heartworm Prevention

pg34

TVC Best Practice Co-op Owner Dr. Les Pelfrey explains the virtues of vigilance in the battle against heartworm.

Diabetes Management

pg39

How veterinary practices can help clients from a diabetes diagnosis to healthy outcomes with home management.

YOUR CLINIC AS A BUSINESS

Inventory Turns over Margin

pg42

Is your inventory investment working for you? Are you measuring just your margin? Learn how measuring your turns can bring you a way better return on your inventory investment.

Adapting to Market Changes

pg44

TVC Co-op Owner Ryan DesJardins describes how consistent clinic assessment, and subsequent adjustment, can be rewarding to the bottom line and provide better customer care.

Are You Picking up Pennies, but Missing the Dollars?

pg46

HMight you be disproportionately focusing on the wrong aspects of your business? Learn about the benefits of more efficient ordering.

Getting Real About Retail

pg48

Have you fully embraced pet retail sales in your practice? You may be missing a \$14 billion opportunity for veterinarians.

The Profitable Practice

pg52

What are the brass tacks for running a successful veterinary business in these times? Dr. Karla B. Cunningham shares her testimonial.

A Message From Our President

There have been seismic shifts in the veterinary industry in the past 10 years, and I've experienced many of them firsthand since I joined TVC at its inception six years ago in 2012.



By Allison Morris

The consolidation of countless independent veterinary clinics into corporate controlled veterinary practices; the springing up of vaccination clinics; feeling the squeeze from the big box stores, and now the online stores! Pricing and margins are different, and so are customer expectations. To stay competitive, the independent clinic has to transform the way it does business.

It is during the consolidation phase of businesses that group purchasing organizations (GPOs) and co-operatives like TVC show up, offering

and GPOs have existed in only the last 20 years. Some have as little as 350 members, while others 5,000. Overall, more than 50 percent of all veterinary clinics now belong to a group. In all cases, they help independent veterinary practitioners compete with the big players by providing access to improved pricing, business education, and marketing.

Why should I join a group, and which one is right for me?

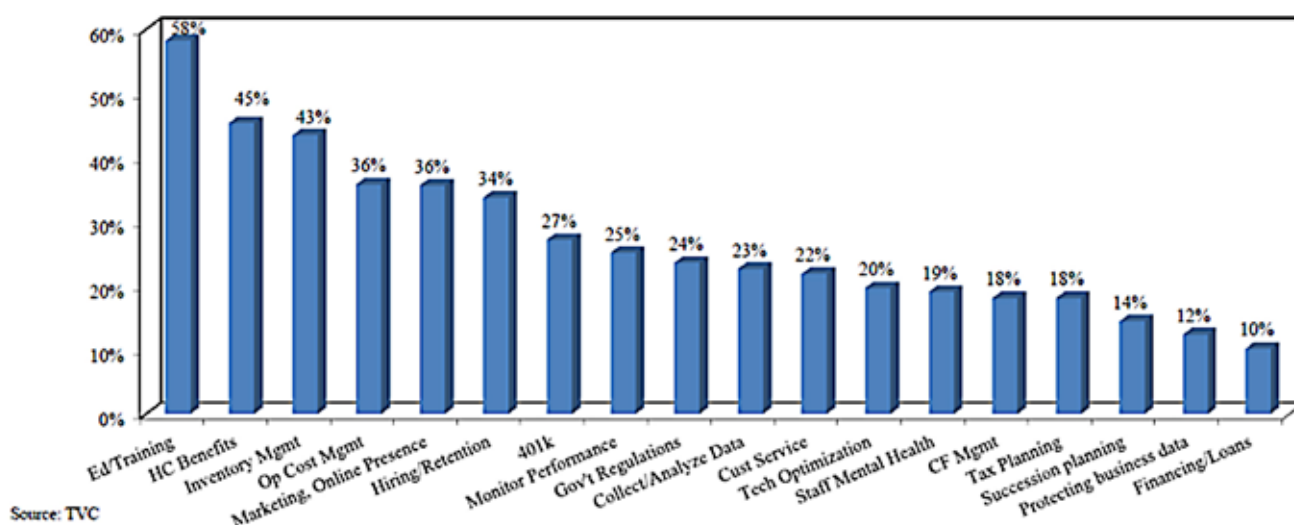
- Does the group align with the way you practice medicine at the clinic?
 - Cooperatives are member-owned; GPOs are not. A member-owned group is unlikely to want to sell, and its bias is to do what is right for its owner/members as they are the ultimate bosses.
 - Cooperatives invest profits back into the group and are able to offer members more programs.
 - In a cooperative, 100 percent of the profit goes to the member/owners; the clinics who joins. GPO profits go back to the group's owner, whom-ever started up the group.

Cooperatives are member-owned; GPOs are not. A member-owned group is unlikely to want to sell, and its bias is to do what is right for its owner/members as they are the ultimate bosses.

small fish the buying power of a big fish – in this case, the consolidated corporate veterinary practices.

Believe it or not, cooperatives have existed for more than 200 years. It's a model that helps keep independent businesses alive when consolidation occurs. In our industry, cooperatives

- If I join a cooperative or GPO, what changes will I need to make in my practice, if any?
 - As a member/owner of TVC – none are mandated! However, the more vendors and programs you utilize at TVC, the more you will get out of TVC.
 - Do I get a voice in what the group does for me and the vendors it chooses?
 - TVC is governed by a board and committees made up of TVC clinics that are our Co-op Owners.
 - Does the group provide education, training, and other services? What's the cost?
 - At TVC, we believe strongly in the importance of offering free ongoing education in order to thrive in a constantly changing business environment. We offer many different types of educational opportunities, which will be covered later in the magazine.
 - Do they survey members and provide feedback about proven best practices that I can incorporate into my practice?
- At TVC, we survey our members quarterly. As a Co-op Owner, your opinion matters to us, and helps us determine where our focus should be with regard to program development.
 - I'd like to share with you a recent finding from our Q3 survey:
 - According to the results of this survey, 58 percent of members indicated they would like additional support or services for education and training in their practices. Help with healthcare benefits and inventory were a distant second and third with 45 percent and 43 percent of members looking for further support in those areas, respectively.
 - The chart below indicates that TVC is and will always be more than just a buying group to our Co-op Owners. We will work hard to use this data to improve what our owners are looking for support in.



So what's the catch?

There is no catch. Cooperatives have been around for a long time and they give small fish the power of a big fish. The model helps keep independent businesses alive when consolidation begins. It has worked for many businesses in different industries and it is what will save the independent veterinary industry.

We would like to share with you some of the insight we have gained from one of the quarterly surveys conducted within TVC, beginning on page 4. Information like this is available year round to all TVC Co-op Owners.

Quarterly Co-op Owner Survey

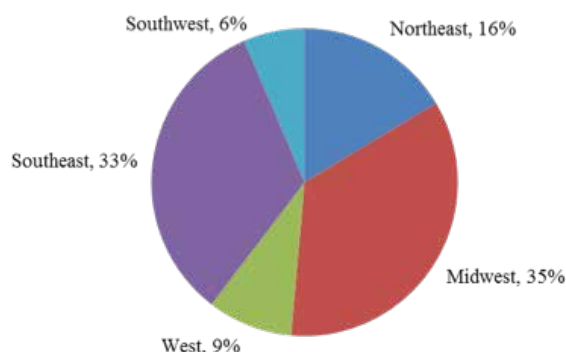
Who are TVC Owner clinics, and what are the best practices?

TVC offers BenchMark Vet™ for free

Participate and get even more stats to compare with other like clinics.

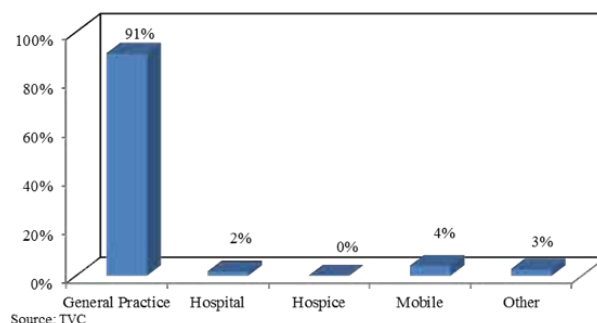
- 91 percent are General Practice.
- Average revenue is ~ \$1.1m

Where TVC Clinics are located:



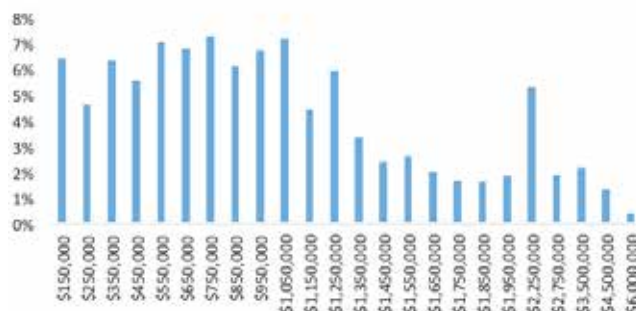
Source: TVC

Types of practices that make up TVC Clinics:



Source: TVC

Revenue of TVC Clinics:



Compare your clinic

Annual Point of Care Diagnostics spending:

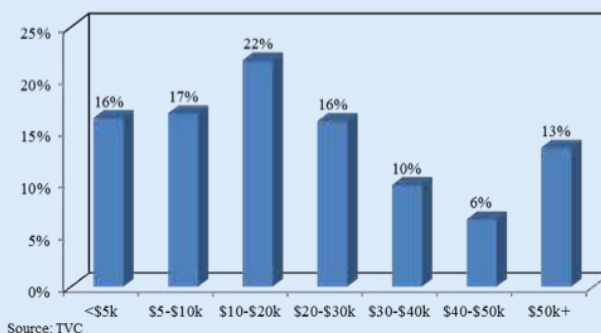
- The top one-fifth of spenders pour in greater than \$40k per year on internal diagnostics.

Annual reference lab spending:

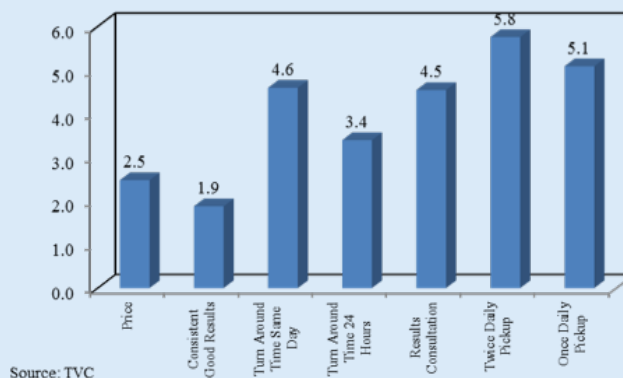
- Over a quarter of owners spend greater than \$40k with reference labs.

Most important criterion for reference lab:

- We asked clinics to rank 1-7 the most important characteristics for them when evaluating reference labs with 1 being the most important and 7 being the lowest.
- The most important characteristic was consistently good results, with pricing a close second.
- Turnaround time of 24 hours was the third most important, coming in ahead of same-day turnaround.



Source: TVC

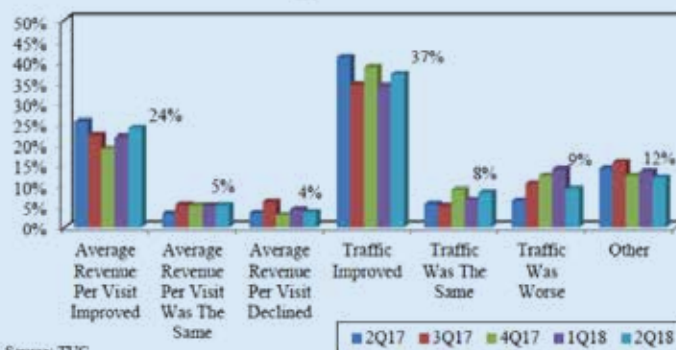


Source: TVC

Compare your clinic

What is driving growth in your clinic:

- 24 percent experienced higher revenue per visit.
- In the free response, participants called out reasons for growth:
 - Adoption of preventative diagnostic testing, and
 - Dermatology demand, testing and treatment



Compare your clinic

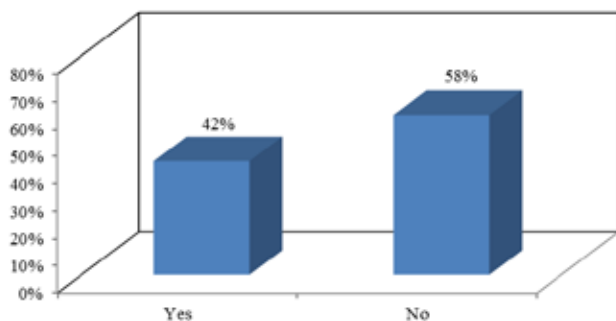
Staffing:

Average pay for:

- DVM – \$87,000
- Vet Tech – \$37,500
- Practice Manager – \$54,750

TVC Survey Average Pay By Region			
	DVM	Vet Tech	Practice Manager
Northeast	\$91,014	\$37,477	\$44,685
Midwest	\$82,965	\$35,042	\$43,316
Southeast	\$86,275	\$35,355	\$46,469
Southwest	\$94,853	\$38,056	\$56,042
West	\$94,057	\$39,434	\$45,189
Average	\$87,010	\$37,480	\$54,749

Vet Industry
Are DVMs Paid On Production



Source: TVC

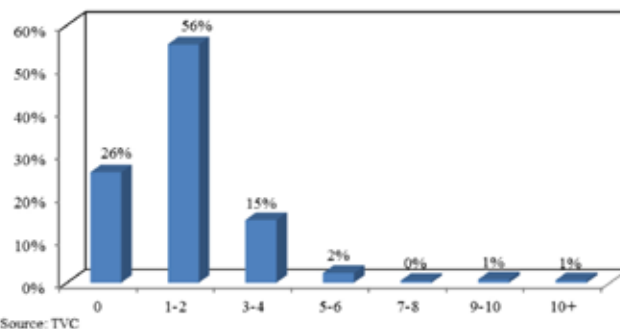
Pay for production

- A little less than half of all DVMs are paid on production (i. e. profit contribution payout).
- Of those that are, only 39 percent of owners include all product sales in the production payout.

Hiring needs

- Participants indicated most practices need 1-2 hires in 2018.
- Most participants are seeing a tight labor market as it is challenging to find quality talent.
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most difficult to find quality talent), owners answered an average of 8.

Vet Industry
Number Of Hires Needed In 2018



Source: TVC

Employee benefits

Below are a list of some of the most common benefits that owners offer their employees:

- 401k With 3% Employer Match
- 2-3 Weeks PTO
- Health Insurance Paid 50% - 100% By Employer
- Discounted or Free Pet Treatment
- Profit Sharing/Year End Bonus
- Malpractice Insurance
- DVM/Vet Tech Student Loan Reimbursement
- Paid License Renewal

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A Click Away

Making money
through an
online
pharmacy

Today's consumers

gravitate toward convenience.

Some are still driven to “streamline shopping,” says Stacey Beddoe, DVM, TVC Co-op Owner from Southwest Animal Hospital in Jefferson City, Missouri. “Some clients gravitate toward being able to accomplish buying what they need in one place. They want to drop their pet off and come back to a pet who is groomed, bathed, up to date on vaccinations, teeth cleaned, and see the wart that has been bothering them on the shoulder has been removed. That may sound extreme, but we are a Walmart society and clients seek veterinary hospitals that are as inclusive by means of services as much as possible.”

Others want to multitask chores/errands and free up more spare time, Dr. Beddoe says. That's where online shopping comes in. However, the refills of products are a different

story, she says. “Making a stop into the clinic for refills is seen as inconvenient by some consumers when compared to the ease of online shopping, which is the other side of consumer habits (compared to streamline shopping). With smart phones and computers everywhere, we have the ability to shop online almost at anytime – even while at work probably!”

In order to meet changing consumer habits, Southwest Animal Hospital set up an online pharmacy through TVC Vendor Vetsource, <https://theveterinarycooperative.coop/membersonly/vendors/vetsource>.



The financial benefits

Offering products through an online pharmacy allows Dr. Beddoo and her staff the freedom of prescribing products strictly based on the medical side without having to weigh it against the economic aspect, she says. “I don’t have to calculate how much I have to buy and determine if I can sell all of it before it expires in order to benefit a patient. It also makes happier staff because the stress of having to stock everything and having to take care of clients when we run out is no longer an issue. I can enjoy the profits made off my recommendations without having to write the big checks to keep the products on the shelves.”

Clients benefit from the convenience as well. “Online shopping is providing free shipping to our front door which is a second layer of convenience and reducing our gasoline costs.”

Getting started

Dr. Beddoo says the setup was extremely easy. It consisted of two, maybe three, short phone calls with Vetsource and sitting down with a list to check off the products Dr. Beddoo wanted available on the hospital’s website. “They have superior customer service,” she says. “It usually only takes a single phone call to resolve any issues that come up. I feel frequency of problems are rather low. I would estimate having 3 to 5 issues that need their assistance per year.”

The main challenge was converting customers used to the in-store pharmacy. Dr. Beddoo says some clients were resistant at first. “It was not an added ‘perk’ that fueled itself, so to speak. It was first seen as a change, not an improvement.”

However, once Southwest Animal Hospital appointed a few team members to walk their clients through the process to sign up, “clients saw it as an advancement in convenience, and that was when it began to thrive,” she says. The growing pains were worth it. “We also now deal with less angry clients frustrated that we are out of stock of their prescription needs, and that lowers everyone’s stress level!”

Dr. Beddoo says she and her staff notify clients during every visit if a product they need is offered online. Every staff member has a list of products offered in the online pharmacy.



Dr. Beddoo says she and her staff notify clients during every visit if a product they need is offered online. Every staff member has a list of products offered in the online pharmacy. “Those products are not kept on the shelf, which forces our staff to offer online ordering to everyone wanting those items,” she says. “The approach is very positive and reassuring that the transition to getting set up using the pharmacy will be easy. We try to set everyone up on the auto ship so that refills will automatically be taken care of without contact being needed between us and the client.”

The online pharmacy meets client needs that include bulk refills on preventions, medicine, and supplements. “Food is secondary,” Dr. Beddoo says, “largely due to Chewy.”

Southwest still maintains an in-house pharmacy, but for smaller quantity, short term, and emergency situations that arise.

On top of your game

Offering a healthy online pharmacy allows you the capacity to offer all the great products we have at our fingertips in this profession, without stressing over the economics of making it profitable, Dr. Beddoo says. “For instance, will you be able to sell the batch that you were required to buy in order to properly stock that particular product without it expiring?”

By having an online pharmacy, you appear to your clients to be at the top of your game, Dr. Beddoo says, offering all the newest and best that this industry has to offer.

“You can quickly adjust the products you want to offer without having to wait and sell what is on your shelf before stocking the new product. For multiple doctor hospitals, you can cater to each doctor’s specific product preferences as you see appropriate within the overall hospital protocol and make them feel more of a respected, valued member of the team. Your inventory manager will also be happier because he/she can more quickly and easily meet the demands and needs of your patients.” ■

Why use an online pharmacy?



- In 2017, more people shopped online on Black Friday than in stores.
- There is a paradigm shift, and younger generations simply aren't doing business the same way.
- There's a lot of money being made online. Your job as a veterinarian is to do good medicine, but TVC has Vetsource as a vendor who will help you make that money.
- Touchpoints: You will not lose your core business because of your own online store. Rather, it opens up a new touch-point for clients to keep in touch with your business.
- Three dogs out of every 20 may need therapeutic diets, but only one-third of those that need diets actually get it. So, 17/20 dogs are perfectly healthy, but if you're not selling to healthy pets, then you're losing those 17/20 clients. Also, those 3/20 you could also reach by increasing compliance.
- 50 percent of a clinic's profitability is made up of diagnostics and products. Thus, you need to keep selling products.

The world has changed; are you willing to evolve your business to meet those changes?

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How Practices Can Prepare for the Millennial Invasion

By Wendy S. Myers, CVJ

Millennials are now the primary pet-owning demographic at 35 percent of U.S. pet owners compared to Baby Boomers' 32 percent, the American Pet Products Association reports. Millennials spend more on veterinary care and pet services compared to other generations. This generation will add 2.6 million pet owners between now and 2020.³



Here are three facts about millennials and how practices need to prepare:

1. Millennials check their smartphones 43 times per day.⁴

Be mobile-friendly. Millennials have the highest mobile usage of all generations, with 97 percent using mobile devices to consume digital content. Veterinary hospitals' websites must be easy to navigate on smartphones and tablets. Millennials are used to researching, ordering and booking on mobile devices.

2. Text is the preferred communication method of millennials.

Look at your smartphone and see who texts you – friends, family, co-workers and people who you know and trust. Veterinary hospitals need to be part of this inner circle, too. Texts have a 99 percent open rate and 95 percent of messages get read within 3 minutes of being sent.

Hospitals must graduate beyond texts for appointment confirmations and dosing reminders. Use direct and automated texts for:

- Medication refill requests
- Prescriptions and diets ready for pickup
- Left you voicemail, please listen and call <employee name> at 555-555-5555
- Late arriving clients
- Get clients who missed appointments to reschedule
- Driving directions to new clients on day of first appointment
- How-to video links
- Weather closure
- Client experience survey
- Extended hours now available/coming soon
- Lab results ready, please call
- Collections

My veterinarian, The Cat Specialist in Castle Rock, Colo., uses text services from Dialog Health. I sent a text to request a refill on my cat's heart medication. The same day, I received a text notice that it was ready for pickup. A text that took less

than 10 seconds replaced a 5-minute phone call. I loved the client experience and the hospital team saved time.

3. Millennials love perks, with 77 percent participating in loyalty reward programs.

Loyalty programs can make clients feel appreciated, improve compliance for patient care and grow clinic revenue. Here are types of loyalty programs:

• **Punch card:** Stamps or punches are earned and rewards are granted when the card is full. My nail salon has a punch card that gives me a \$15 credit toward services once 10 punches are completed. Employees know my name and encourage me to forward book.

• **Points:** Users accrue points that may be redeemed for cash back or free items. At Starbucks, you earn points for each coffee purchase and redeem points for free coffee. An app tracks rewards.

• **Membership:** These pay-to-play programs charge a fee to participate. Rewards are VIP services such as Amazon Prime's free shipping.

Animal Clinic Del Rancho in Scottsdale, Arizona, rewards clients. For every \$100 spent, clients get a digital stamp, with 16 stamps earning a \$100 credit towards a future visit. Rewards never expire.

Companies offering veterinary client loyalty programs include (The companies referenced below at the time of this article are not TVC vendor programs and TVC has not done any due diligence on them):

- MBF Loyalty,
- My Vet Perks
- Rethink Veterinary Solutions
- Older practice owners can't afford to ignore millennials. They must embrace new technology and marketing strategies for millennials. ■



Wendy S. Myers owns Communication Solutions for Veterinarians in Castle Pines, Colo. She helps teams improve client service, communication skills and compliance through consulting, seminars and monthly CE credit webinars. Wendy is a certified veterinary journalist and author of *101 Communication Skills for Veterinary Teams*. She offers training packages for receptionists and entire teams. You can reach her at wmyers@csvets.com or www.csvets.com.



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According to the American Pet Products Association (APPA) annual industry-wide spending figures, overall spending in the pet industry has surpassed previous spending by more than \$6 billion. Pet industry spending for 2016 came in at a record high \$66.75 billion, up from \$60.28 billion in 2015, or a 10.7 percent growth.





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Veterinary care spending remains the second source of spending in the pet industry at \$15.95 billion, according to the figures. While routine veterinary visits have not necessarily increased, new advances in health care and services available may be contributing to the 3.4 percent growth.

Yet consider how much more spend is out there. Pet food, supplies, medicines – all things veterinary practices can sell to their clients before they walk out the door. The following are some ideas on how to capture more of the pet spend.

Serve up more pet food

Pet food is tops in pet spending with \$28.23 billion, according to APPA figures. “Interest in high-end, premium pet food and treats continues to be a key driver for increased spending in the pet food category,” APPA said in a release.

Fast moving products require lower margins to compete, maybe as low as 15 percent. This does not make them low profit because of the turns. Slow moving products can accommodate higher GMROI (margins), sometimes over 100 percent.

A typical practice may see somewhere around 5 percent of total sales through pet food – 10 percent if they are doing a great job. And those sales are predominately through prescription.

But imagine if you could get 100 percent. It's like in baseball – you don't hit the ball 100 percent of the time. A good hitter has what, a .300 batting average? But veterinary practices have to ask 100 percent of time if you're going to get a higher percentage to walk out with pet food.

Major pet food companies are making this easier for veterinary practices through promotions. They're also providing the ability to sell online. With TVC, Members get credit for

rebates, and can sell online. You may not make as much margin, but you will be assured you will get 12 months of food. And 12 months at a lower margin will probably put veterinary practices in a better position than 6-8 months of orders with higher margin.

Don't let any customer leave without first asking about their pet food purchase. Practices can stay competitive with big box retailers by setting up online ordering through their website, and being sensitive to the prices offered at competitors.

Monitor the marketplace

The days of charging 50 percent margin on everything are over. There are simply too many marketplace competitors – big box retailers, online retailers, home deliveries, local veterinarians – to compete with using that old equation.

Veterinary clinics should try and match what they are selling with the marketplace. Otherwise, customers may see them as price gouging vs. competitor prices. There is a balance to it. Obviously, you don't want to undercut what things are sold for in the marketplace. That's giving money away. But, it's better to make a dollar on something than nothing because you don't sell it (due to having a much higher price).

What veterinarians need to think about today is variable margin. The more times you sell the product daily, weekly or monthly, the more turns. Competitors are likely to lower margins to try and take that business from you. Fast moving products require lower margins to compete, maybe as low as 15 percent. This does not make them low profit because of the turns. Slow moving products can accommodate higher GMROI (margins), sometimes over 100 percent. In fact, you may be losing money on low turns products, not making even 50% GMROI (Gross Margin Return On Investment).



Expand the product shelf

Look for other things pet owners are spending money on. It could be dog beds, collars or toys. According to APPA,



\$14.71 billion was spent on items such as beds, collars, leashes, toys, travel items, clothing, food and water bowls, and other accessories. There is no reason why a practice can't offer those at the checkout counter. Anything that would make that dog or cat mentally, physically healthy, is something worth looking into selling.

Book it

Veterinarians need to follow dentists' lead and use forward booking for preventive checkups, medical progress exams and chronic disease management, according to Wendy Myers, owner of Communication Solutions for Veterinarians. An AAHA State of the Industry Report done a few years ago estimated that going from 5 percent to 10 percent of forward booked exams could generate \$40,000 in additional revenue for a typical practice or equal to 3 percent revenue growth. The report estimated a total of \$350 million in additional preventive care revenue for the veterinary profession. According to the 2015 AAHA State of the Industry report, 6 out of 10 pet owners would forward book their pets' preventive checkups.

So what are some effective ways to forward book? Myers says that one way is to direct the client to a specific date and time, increasing the likelihood she'll schedule. "Dr. <Name> could see you on Wednesday, Oct. 19 at 10 a.m. or Friday, Oct. 21 at 3 p.m. for your pet's next checkup. Which fits your schedule?"

Another method involves confirmation. When booking exams six months or more ahead, veterinary practices should call clients two weeks in advance to confirm in case appointments need to be rescheduled, Myers says. Also, they should call two days before as a courtesy reminder.

Dental cleanings

TVC Co-op Owner Jennifer Mathis, DVM, Family Pet Veterinary Center Norwalk, Iowa says that in her first year of emphasizing dentistry in her practice, the dentistry portion of the business changed from 5 percent to 30 percent of her gross.

What was good for her business was good for the health of her pet patients. Pet owners would volunteer to her how much more energetic and happier their pets were following dental procedures such as tooth extractions. By doing a thorough examination and using dental X-rays, in many cases Mathis uncovered hidden problems, and hidden pain.

Mathis says veterinary practices should approach dentistry as a regular part of the patient's care. She advocates that every pet needs an anesthetic dental procedure every year – or in some cases more frequently. "Do more dentistry, you'll have healthier pets, and build the bond with your clients," she says. "We all know with much calculus a dental procedure is necessary, it's the ones with little build up that we cannot forget the fact that this is a preventable disease."

Home care is a way for veterinarians to stay connected with their clients. It can also be a profit center with the products you're able to sell through your clinic. Helping clients choose do-able home care gives the best outcome. Veterinarians can even invite clients to return for complimentary dental exams as every visit is another touch point for building the bond while increasing education and compliance.

They're covered

Rebecca Rebillard, Practice Manager for TVC Co-op Owner Aspetuck Animal Hospital (New Preston, Conn.), says pet insurance and wellness plans can eliminate much of the tough part of the client discussion related to cost. Aspetuck Animal Hospital uses Petplan insurance. "It takes the discussion of finances off the table when speaking to a client about treatment plans" she says. "We always recommend what is best for the pet; however, sometimes we find ourselves going to option B or option C to work within a client's budget. Clients that have Petplan know that they will be reimbursed for the care their pet receives, so they say yes to our first recommendation, which is what is best for their pet." ■

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Why Forward Booking is the Best Strategy for Veterinary Practices in 2019

By Wendy S. Myers, CVJ



Dentists have established the gold standard

in forward booking patients. When I visited Tom Kampfe, DDS, in Centennial, Colo., my hygienist Yvonne pulled up the appointment schedule while I was still in the dental chair. She said, “Let’s schedule your next visit now, which will be the week of Jan. 23. I see that you usually make appointments on Monday or Friday mornings. Would Monday, Jan. 23 at 8 a.m. work for you?” Yvonne led me to schedule and was savvy enough to check my preferences. I asked her how many patients forward book. She replied, “About 90 percent. I’m persuasive because if patients don’t schedule, I have to call them. It saves us both time when we schedule now.”

For dental offices, this scheduling technique serves two purposes: 1) Safeguards patients’ preventive care and 2) Protects practices’ financial health. Patient care improves because timely visits let the dental team diagnose oral problems early. As a business strategy for dentists, scheduling the next visit today will keep the hygiene schedule full and productive. When the hygiene schedule is not full, a domino effect will occur. In addition to health risks to patients, the dentist will see vacancies in future treatment schedules. At least 80 percent of dental problems – root canals, crowns and restorations – are diagnosed during hygiene appointments. When patients leave today’s hygiene appointment without a future visit scheduled, a dental practice’s profits will decrease at least 50 percent.

Veterinarians need to follow dentists’ lead and use forward booking for preventive checkups, medical progress exams and chronic disease management. Besides providing timely preventive care and early detection, the 2013 AAHA State of the Industry Report estimated that going from 5 percent to 10 percent of forward booked exams

could generate \$40,000 in additional revenue for a typical practice or equal to 3 percent revenue growth. The report estimated a total of \$350 million in additional preventive care revenue for the veterinary profession. According to the 2015 AAHA State of the Industry report, 6 out of 10 pet owners would forward book their pets’ preventive checkups.

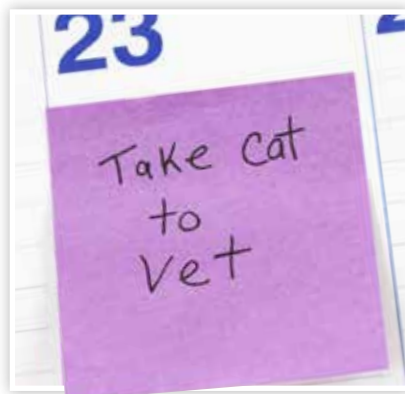
Follow these steps to implement forward booking:

Proactively lead clients to schedule

Say, “Just as your dentist has you schedule your next hygiene appointment at checkout, we do the same so we can proactively manage your pet’s health. Dr. <Name> could see you on Wednesday, Oct. 19 at 10 a.m. or Friday, Oct. 21 at 3 p.m. for your pet’s next checkup. Which fits your schedule?”

Direct the client to a specific date and time, increasing the likelihood she'll schedule. If the client is here at 10 a.m. on a Wednesday, she can probably visit again at a similar time and day of the week. Book the appointment with the same doctor, ensuring continuity of care and efficient use of exam time. Known as the two-yes-options technique, this phrasing guides pet owners to book future exams.

If a procrastinator doesn't want to book the next exam, be persistent. Say, "I understand that you don't know your schedule 12 months from today. Let's schedule your pet's next checkup for



for efficient, timely visits. Aim for the scheduling pattern of preventive care / sick / preventive care. You're more likely to stay on time if you sandwich a sick-patient exam between two preventive checkups.

Confirm forward-booked exams earlier

To avoid no-shows or cancellations for forward-booked exams, confirm them one to two weeks in advance. Say, "This is <your name> calling from <Your Veterinary Hospital> to confirm your pet's checkup with Dr. <Name> next week on <date> beginning at 10 a.m. Please bring a teaspoon-sized stool sample that's fresh within ____ hours, as well as any medications and supplements you're currently giving your pet. If you have questions, please call our office number. We also will call you two days before the exam as a courtesy reminder."

Implement disease-management exams

Forward booking is especially important for patients with chronic health conditions such as cardiomyopathy, hyperthyroidism, kidney disease and diabetes. Once you diagnose a pet with a chronic disease, switch the patient from a preventive care exam to a disease-management exam code. The disease-management exam reminds quarterly or at the interval the veterinarian sets. Scheduled follow-up care will let the veterinarian provide optimal disease management. Clients also will appreciate that the veterinarian has spread out the cost of care.

My cat, Caymus, has cardiomyopathy and gets cardiac workups every six months. To forward book chronic conditions, use benefit statements such as: "Let's schedule Caymus' next cardiac workup, which will be due in 6 months. We want to successfully manage his cardiomyopathy and make adjustments as needed. Six months from today would be <date>. Would you prefer a morning or afternoon appointment?" ■

Besides providing timely preventive care and early detection, the 2013 AAHA State of the Industry Report estimated that going from 5 percent to 10 percent of forward booked exams could generate \$40,000 in additional revenue for a typical practice or equal to 3 percent revenue growth.

this same day and time next year. We will contact you two weeks before the appointment to confirm, so if you need to change the exam it will be easy. By scheduling today, you will get your first choice of doctor, day and time. Your appointment reminder for Wednesday, Oct. 19 at 10 a.m. will print on today's receipt."

Color code forward-booked exams

When booking exams six months or more ahead, call clients two weeks in advance to confirm in case appointments need to be rescheduled. Also call two days before as a courtesy reminder. Use a unique color code in your practice-management software so you can identify appointments that were booked in advance. Shifting to earlier appointment confirmation calls and/or emails will allow you to reschedule if necessary. After all, rescheduling appointments is better than having no future appointments. Pre-blocking your schedule lets you plan

Wendy S. Myers owns Communication Solutions for Veterinarians in Castle Pines, Colo. She helps teams improve client service, communication skills and compliance through consulting, seminars and monthly CE credit webinars. Wendy is a certified veterinary journalist and author of 101 Communication Skills for Veterinary Teams. Her "Callers Into New Clients Course" teaches receptionists how to turn price shoppers into new clients. You can reach her at wmyers@csvets.com or www.csvets.com.

Take a bite out of Lyme.

NexGard® (afoxolaner) is the **ONLY** chew that combines all of the following benefits into the one that dogs prefer¹:

- ✓ Kills fleas
- ✓ Kills ticks — lone star ticks, brown dog ticks, American dog ticks, and black-legged (deer) ticks
- ✓ **And FDA-approved for the prevention** of *Borrelia burgdorferi* infections as a direct result of killing *Ixodes scapularis* vector ticks



¹Data on file.

NexGard is a Merial product. Merial is now part of Boehringer Ingelheim.



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IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: NexGard is for use in dogs only. The most frequently reported adverse reactions include vomiting, pruritus, lethargy, diarrhea and lack of appetite. The safe use of NexGard in pregnant, breeding, or lactating dogs has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures or neurologic disorders. For more information, see the full prescribing information or visit www.NexGardForDogs.com.

NexGard® (afoxolaner) Chewables

CAUTION: Federal (USA) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Description:

NexGard® (afoxolaner) is available in four sizes of beef-flavored, soft chewables for oral administration to dogs and puppies according to their weight. Each chewable is formulated to provide a minimum afoxolaner dosage of 1.14 mg/lb (2.5 mg/kg). Afoxolaner has the chemical composition 1-Naphthalenecarboxamide, 4-[5-[3-chloro-5-(trifluoromethyl)-phenyl]-4, 5-dihydro-5-(trifluoromethyl)-3-isoxazolyl]-N-[2-oxo-2-[(2,2,2-trifluoroethyl)amino]ethyl].

Indications:

NexGard kills adult fleas and is indicated for the treatment and prevention of flea infestations (*Ctenocephalides felis*), and the treatment and control of Black-legged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), American Dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*), and Brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) infestations in dogs and puppies 8 weeks of age and older, weighing 4 pounds of body weight or greater, for one month. NexGard is indicated for the prevention of *Borrelia burgdorferi* infections as a direct result of killing *Ixodes scapularis* vector ticks.

Dosage and Administration:

NexGard is given orally once a month, at the minimum dosage of 1.14 mg/lb (2.5 mg/kg).

Dosing Schedule:

Body Weight	Afoxolaner Per Chewable (mg)	Chewables Administered
4.0 to 10.0 lbs.	11.3	One
10.1 to 24.0 lbs.	28.3	One
24.1 to 60.0 lbs.	68	One
60.1 to 121.0 lbs.	136	One
Over 121.0 lbs.	Administer the appropriate combination of chewables	

NexGard can be administered with or without food. Care should be taken that the dog consumes the complete dose, and treated animals should be observed for a few minutes to ensure that part of the dose is not lost or refused. If it is suspected that any of the dose has been lost or if vomiting occurs within two hours of administration, redose with another full dose. If a dose is missed, administer NexGard and resume a monthly dosing schedule.

Flea Treatment and Prevention:

Treatment with NexGard may begin at any time of the year. In areas where fleas are common year-round, monthly treatment with NexGard should continue the entire year without interruption.

To minimize the likelihood of flea reinfestation, it is important to treat all animals within a household with an approved flea control product.

Tick Treatment and Control:

Treatment with NexGard may begin at any time of the year (see **Effectiveness**).

Contraindications:

There are no known contraindications for the use of NexGard.

Warnings:

Not for use in humans. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of accidental ingestion, contact a physician immediately.

Precautions:

Afoxolaner is a member of the isoxazoline class. This class has been associated with neurologic adverse reactions including tremors, ataxia, and seizures. Seizures have been reported in dogs receiving isoxazoline class drugs, even in dogs without a history of seizures. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures or neurologic disorders (see **Adverse Reactions** and **Post-Approval Experience**).

The safe use of NexGard in breeding, pregnant or lactating dogs has not been evaluated.

Adverse Reactions:

In a well-controlled US field study, which included a total of 333 households and 615 treated dogs (415 administered afoxolaner; 200 administered active control), no serious adverse reactions were observed with NexGard.

Over the 90-day study period, all observations of potential adverse reactions were recorded. The most frequent reactions reported at an incidence of > 1% within any of the three months of observations are presented in the following table. The most frequently reported adverse reaction was vomiting. The occurrence of vomiting was generally self-limiting and of short duration and tended to decrease with subsequent doses in both groups. Five treated dogs experienced anorexia during the study, and two of those dogs experienced anorexia with the first dose but not subsequent doses.

Table 1: Dogs With Adverse Reactions.

	Treatment Group			
	Afoxolaner		Oral active control	
	N ¹	% (n=415)	N ²	% (n=200)
Vomiting (with and without blood)	17	4.1	25	12.5
Dry/Flaky Skin	13	3.1	2	1.0
Diarrhea (with and without blood)	13	3.1	7	3.5
Lethargy	7	1.7	4	2.0
Anorexia	5	1.2	9	4.5

¹Number of dogs in the afoxolaner treatment group with the identified abnormality.

²Number of dogs in the control group with the identified abnormality.

In the US field study, one dog with a history of seizures experienced a seizure on the same day after receiving the first dose and on the same day after receiving the second dose of NexGard.

This dog experienced a third seizure one week after receiving the third dose. The dog remained enrolled and completed the study. Another dog with a history of seizures had a seizure 19 days after the third dose of NexGard. The dog remained enrolled and completed the study. A third dog with a history of seizures received NexGard and experienced no seizures throughout the study.

Post-Approval Experience (July 2018):

The following adverse events are based on post-approval adverse drug experience reporting. Not all adverse events are reported to FDA/CVM. It is not always possible to reliably estimate the adverse event frequency or establish a causal relationship to product exposure using these data.

The following adverse events reported for dogs are listed in decreasing order of reporting frequency for NexGard:

Vomiting, pruritus, lethargy, diarrhea (with and without blood), anorexia, seizure, hyperactivity/restlessness, panting, erythema, ataxia, dermatitis (including rash, papules), allergic reactions (including hives, swelling), and tremors.

Contact Information:

For a copy of the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) or to report suspected adverse drug events, contact Merial at 1-888-637-4251 or www.nexgardfordogs.com.

For additional information about adverse drug experience reporting for animal drugs, contact FDA at 1-888-FDA-VETS or online at <http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth>.

Mode of Action:

Afoxolaner is a member of the isoxazoline family, shown to bind at a binding site to inhibit insect and acarine ligand-gated chloride channels, in particular those gated by the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), thereby blocking pre- and post-synaptic transfer of chloride ions across cell membranes. Prolonged afoxolaner-induced hyperexcitation results in uncontrolled activity of the central nervous system and death of insects and acarines. The selective toxicity of afoxolaner between insects and acarines and mammals may be inferred by the differential sensitivity of the insects and acarines' GABA receptors versus mammalian GABA receptors.

Effectiveness:

In a well-controlled laboratory study, NexGard began to kill fleas four hours after initial administration and demonstrated >99% effectiveness at eight hours. In a separate well-controlled laboratory study, NexGard demonstrated 100% effectiveness against adult fleas 24 hours post-infestation for 35 days, and was ≥93% effective at 12 hours post-infestation through Day 21, and on Day 35. On Day 28, NexGard was 81.1% effective 12 hours post-infestation. Dogs in both the treated and control groups that were infested with fleas on Day -1 generated flea eggs at 12- and 24-hours post-treatment (0-11 eggs and 1-17 eggs in the NexGard treated dogs, and 4-90 eggs and 0-118 eggs in the control dogs, at 12- and 24-hours, respectively). At subsequent evaluations post-infestation, fleas from dogs in the treated group were essentially unable to produce any eggs (0-1 eggs) while fleas from dogs in the control group continued to produce eggs (1-141 eggs).

In a 90-day US field study conducted in households with existing flea infestations of varying severity, the effectiveness of NexGard against fleas on the Day 30, 60 and 90 visits compared with baseline was 98.0%, 99.7%, and 99.9%, respectively.

Collectively, the data from the three studies (two laboratory and one field) demonstrate that NexGard kills fleas before they can lay eggs, thus preventing subsequent flea infestations after the start of treatment of existing flea infestations.

In well-controlled laboratory studies, NexGard demonstrated >97% effectiveness against *Dermacentor variabilis*, >94% effectiveness against *Ixodes scapularis*, and >83% effectiveness against *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, 48 hours post-infestation for 30 days. At 72 hours post-infestation, NexGard demonstrated >97% effectiveness against *Amblyomma americanum* for 30 days. In two separate, well-controlled laboratory studies, NexGard was effective at preventing *Borrelia burgdorferi* infections after dogs were infested with *Ixodes scapularis* vector ticks 28 days post-treatment.

Animal Safety:

In a margin of safety study, NexGard was administered orally to 8 to 9-week-old Beagle puppies at 1, 3, and 5 times the maximum exposure dose (6.3 mg/kg) for three treatments every 28 days, followed by three treatments every 14 days, for a total of six treatments. Dogs in the control group were sham-dosed. There were no clinically-relevant effects related to treatment on physical examination, body weight, food consumption, clinical pathology (hematology, clinical chemistries, or coagulation tests), gross pathology, histopathology or organ weights. Vomiting occurred throughout the study, with a similar incidence in the treated and control groups, including one dog in the 5x group that vomited four hours after treatment.

In a well-controlled field study, NexGard was used concomitantly with other medications, such as vaccines, anthelmintics, antibiotics (including topicals), steroids, NSAIDs, anesthetics, and antihistamines. No adverse reactions were observed from the concomitant use of NexGard with other medications.

Storage Information:

Store at or below 30°C (86°F) with excursions permitted up to 40°C (104°F).

How Supplied:

NexGard is available in four sizes of beef-flavored soft chewables: 11.3, 28.3, 68 or 136 mg afoxolaner. Each chewable size is available in color-coded packages of 1, 3 or 6 beef-flavored chewables.

NADA 141-406, Approved by FDA

Marketed by: Frontline Vet Labs™, a Division of Merial, Inc.
Duluth, GA 30096-4640 USA

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A little irritation can be a serious problem for pets and their owners. In the case of one client of TVC Co-op Owner Mary Felt, DVM, Dupage Animal Hospital in Villa Park, Ill., it was a persistent ear infection. The pet owner had taken his dog to another veterinarian, who tried different treatments before deciding to perform surgery to open up the ear canal more.

Dr. Felt initially tried out a different food diet for the dog, but to no avail. It wasn't until they conducted allergy testing that they were able to determine what was causing the issue and how to treat it.

"When we finally did the allergy test, we discovered that the dog had no food allergies; it was all environmental. We started immunotherapy treatment, and that dog never had another ear infection in its life."

The biggest thing, Dr. Felt says, was how they were able to help the human-animal bond. "The owner was so happy, and his dog was playful, running around again and back to feeling good."

Impact of allergies

TVC Co-op Owner Sam Morris, DVM, Plum Creek Regional Animal Medical Center in Crete, Ill., says any good generalist can provide allergy testing and treatment for clients. If they refer clients to a dermatologist, they could be missing a significant amount of potential business.

"About half of the patients that come in during allergy season have some form of allergy," Dr. Morris, who is also a



Dr. Felt with a client

TVC Board Member, says. “That’s a lot of practice to throw away if I am not treating them.”

The symptoms show up in many different ways. Ear infections, skin infections, inflamed eyes, itchiness, sneezing, vomiting, diarrhea, cats with asthma, even allergic bronchitis in dogs. Dr. Felt says she has a handful of dog patients who “like clockwork, will end up with a urinary tract infection every single fall. Or, as soon as the ragweed blooms, they end up with a urinary tract infection.”

The challenge is, many things can lead to allergies in pets, including food allergens, environmental, inhalant allergens and more. Because of this, veterinarians need the tools to zero in on exactly what’s causing the allergies.

Testing and treatment

Dr. Felt says they’ve gotten positive feedback from clients on the Spectrum Labs SPOT testing. It’s a simple blood test, but provides comprehensive results to give a more accurate picture of what allergens are affecting the pet. “Clients love it,”

Dr. Felt says. “Afterwards, whatever the report shows, I can develop a treatment plan from that.”

Some dogs have such bad environmental allergies that Dr. Felt says she strongly recommends immunotherapy. Spectrum increases the likelihood for quicker, more lasting relief by including up to 21 allergens in a single treatment set. Treatment for allergies is via subcutaneous injections of the offending allergens. These shots are administered over a 9-month period and administered in increasing doses as well as gradual increases in concentration. The initial 9-month period of hyposensitization is followed by monthly maintenance shots. There is also an oral spray available, specifically made for the allergens the patients are having problems with, for clients who don’t want to give their pets injections.

But every single patient with allergies will have something different, Dr. Felt says. “I have a lot of dogs where the allergy is due more to food, so we manage the food and we can change things from their environment. With probably half of the dogs that get allergy testing, we change so many things

at the home and diet that we get their allergies under control. We might have some minor seasonal blowups, but again, we know it's coming, and we know how to handle it and can work through it a lot."

Dr. Morris says having the ability to provide the client with accurate information helps make it easier to get them on board with treatments. After trying several other allergy tests, Plum Creek settled on Spectrum's Spot Platinum 91. "Clients really love the in-depth booklet that comes with the testing. Value-wise, the mix of allergens tested for in the Spot Platinum 91 test is great."

Being able to use an effective product like Spectrum's testing, as well as it coming from a TVC vendor "is a win-win ... as well as a win for the patient," Dr. Morris says.

Following the results of the test, Dr. Morris says they schedule a 45-minute sit-down meeting with the clients to go over the booklet and the veterinary practice's plan for managing the allergies going forward. "The pets can come along at this visit. They get lots of love and treats from the staff and doctors, and nothing stressful happens to them. We are sure to emphasize that allergies are life-long, and serious management saves the pet grief and the owners money in the long run rather than continually treating secondary infections. Allergic pets that are uncontrolled are often itchy, smelly and miserable with bacterial infections and chronic otitis. Every time an owner pushes their stinky pet away or yells at them to stop the scratching breaks that pet's heart."

Morris has seen the positive results firsthand with her daughter's dog Chevy, a Golden Retriever. "I can say from seeing the improvement in my daughter's dog that diet change, known allergen avoidance when possible and the treatment kits work. Chevy was an allergic mess by 10 months old and now doesn't smell, has no hot spots and only rarely gets otitis."



Chevy

Human-animal bond

Dr. Felt says client knowledge of the benefits of allergy testing is becoming more prevalent, to the point where some ask her about it before she even has a chance to bring it up. "The one client whose dog had the ear surgery, he's owned four dogs, and all four have had allergy tests, even though two never showed clinical signs. He just wanted to know if there could be allergies in the future or what foods to avoid because he saw the difference it made with his other dog."

Dr. Morris says keeping their allergy patients in-house and happy strengthens their bond with the pet and pet parent in a way that benefits everyone. "There are so many pathways available to us to choose in treating allergies that it is important for us to follow these patients rather than us just being gatekeepers for dermatologists," she says. "As generalists, we can figure this out." ■

TVC Resources

Tools to level the playing field and thrive



At TVC, one of our goals is to give

you all the tools that you need to succeed. We acknowledge that for each clinic and situation, there will be different needs, and thus different resources necessary. Therefore, we cater to a diverse range of resources and opportunities. The basics start with a program of Rebates and Discounts. TVC program savings range from 2 percent to 50 percent, with the average clinic owner saving an overall 5 percent on TVC partner co-op vendors purchases. We have over 100 rebate and discount programs. However, as our founder Rich Morris always says, “You cannot discount yourself into profitability”. TVC offers way more beyond just savings:

Promotions:

As a TVC Co-op Owner, you will have access to our promotions page. This is a one-stop-shop for TVC monthly exclusives and industry promotions. Each week before you order your supplies and products, check out this page to see if you should take advantage of a promotional special. Ordering one more box of a product might save you more than the cost of those extra products.

TVC Magazine:

Our monthly magazine is filled with articles on the latest happenings of the veterinary industry, business and management techniques and interviews with peers, sharing their best practices. These monthly educational articles may inspire you to make changes that will turn your clinic into a best practice medically as well as profitably.

The HIVE:

Our online forum, The HIVE, acts as a meeting place of sorts for topics to be hashed out amongst TVC Co-op Owner clinics. An all-around useful portal to use, whatever it may be that you would like to share, or discuss.

Benchmark Vet™:

How does one measure their own success? By setting a benchmark. This free TVC service allows you to track and compare your clinic’s financial health and performance, against that of other clinics. Measurement is the first step to finding the path to profitability.



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ThinkTanks™:

Would you like to join a carefully curated group of veterinarians in similar situations, whether it be geographically or in the same demographically? ThinkTank™ groups meet monthly on-line for about an hour to discuss problems and solutions common to the participating clinics. They are led by a professional consultant that guides the group to finding practical and real-life solutions to the frustrations of managing a veterinary clinic. Join a TVC ThinkTank in 2019 for free.

TVC University:

- Back to school? You do not need another degree, but you might want to brush up on Business, Management or Medical Techniques. TVC Co-op Owner Carol Falck's (Petwise clinic in Cleveland, GA) comments are typical of those that take advantage of our TVC University programs: "An excellent course. This course alone would be a worthwhile reason to join TVC. Thank you for some much-needed business training & motivation to improve our patient care and profit!"

TVC University has three types of programs you can take from the easy chair at home or in the office:

- **CE Live Online webinars** cover the latest techniques in great medical care once a month and allow you an opportunity to receive CE credit for your attendance at the webinar, which means that you can receive 12 CE credits a year, free, from the comfort of your desk.
- **TVC University Live webinars** share with you topics that will help you manage and increase profitability of your clinic.
- **TVC University On-line** are self-paced RACE approved continuing education courses, designed to expand your business knowledge and coming soon, TVC vendors will be supplying RACE Approved CE credit for animal health care as well. This is available 24/7, allowing you to learn at your own pace, to better your knowledge or to obtain those needed CE credits, all for free.

TVC Events

TVC East, Central & West are three conferences designed, hosted and organized each year to benefit your clinic's success. At these conferences, you can expect a wonderful lineup of speakers, for CE credit; you will have time to learn more about TVC offerings, rebates, and discount programs, as well as talk directly to our vendor partners about their products and programs that can help you practice better medicine and increase your profitability. Also, take part in the mini Treasure Hunt and enter raffles to win great giveaways!

TVC Central: Hosted at Chicago Vet Conference - Chicago, IL (May 12-16)

TVC East: 2019 TVC CE Conference & Trade Show – Atlanta, GA (September, Dates TBA) (Free for TVC Co-op Owners and \$150 for guests)

TVC West: Hosted at Wild West Vet – Reno, NV (Oct 23-27)
In order to register for the conferences listed above, please visit tvc.coop/to/events

TVC is also present at many other tradeshow and expos across the nation. Come talk to the TVC team in person at these following locations:

WVC (Western Veterinary Conference) - Las Vegas, NV (Feb 17-20)

VHMA Practice Managers Meeting – Glendale, AZ (Sep 26-28)

New York Vet – New York, NY (November 7-8)

Fetch San Diego – San Diego, CA (December 12-15)

VMX (Veterinary Meeting & Expo) – Orlando, FL (Jan 18-22) ■



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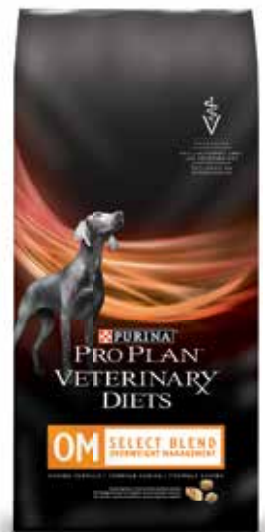
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Become the Go-to Cutting Edge Clinic

TVC Co-op Owner Antigo Veterinary Clinic is investing in innovative services for its current – and future – customers

The results were undeniable. The 6-year old Labrador Retriever had orthopedic and allergy issues. His Achilles tendons were essentially breaking down, and Sarah Lautzenhiser, DVM, knew that almost always meant surgery was needed. But the clinic treating her future husband's dog had recommended stem cell therapy. Lautzenhiser remembers watching as the dog not only recovered, but thrived. Three years later, the 9-year old Lab has stabilized ankles, the energy of a puppy, and "jumps around like a kangaroo," Lautzenhiser says.

"After seeing that happen, I knew it was something I wanted to look into for our practice," says Lautzenhiser, a veterinarian at Wisconsin-based Antigo Veterinary Clinic, and TVC Co-op Owner.

Improving quality of life

Therapeutic stem cell therapies, such as VetStem, have the potential to give pets a new lease on life. VetStem cells can treat arthritis in dogs and cats, as well as joints, tendons and ligaments



in horses, reducing pain and improving an animal's quality of life. It's gaining interest as an alternative to traditional treatments, such as NSAIDs for pain management, and surgery. Reception from pet owners has been favorable. In clinical data collected from 90-day owner surveys, VetStem reported that 81 percent of pet owners with older dogs (ages 9 to 18 years) who used the VetStem's procedure indicated their pet's condition as having improved.

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What pushed the pedal for Lautzenhiser was a client who asked her if stem cell therapy was something Antigo Veterinary Clinic could do for his two geriatric dogs. After seeing the results in her husband's Labrador, she had also heard endorsements from colleagues at a training event. Lautzenhiser decided to research the procedure and protocols. She contacted VetStem, completed the training provided, and used the VetStem support team to assist with the first couple of treatments.

Lautzenhiser says the pet patients from those procedures, which were arthritis cases, have definitely showed improvement. "The client perceived improvement even within a few weeks of being treated and were very happy with the outcome," she says. She's also done an elbow arthritis case that hasn't had quite the same response, but it was the first time injecting an elbow, and "any time you implement something new you are learning."

Investing in cutting edge

Lautzenhiser says offering procedures and therapies such as VetStem is part of Antigo Veterinary Clinic's approach to be known as an innovative, forward thinking practice. Antigo offers services such as laser therapy, in-depth diagnostic workups, ultrasound, and digital dental X-ray. They are also looking into training for therapeutic and massage therapy for pets, as well as acupuncture training.

"We consider ourselves a clinic with high standards of care," she says.

She says being one of the first local clinics to offer VetStem is an investment in future clients as much as the current customer base. "I think it will get more people interested," she says. "As a practice we are always trying to promote new modalities of treatment. People like that when they see that in a practice, whether it's on the veterinary side or the human side of health, that you don't stay stagnant, and that you are constantly trying to learn and implement new things."



"It'll help us get recognized more as the cutting edge practice in the area," she says. "We have a new competitor, and I think this will set us apart from them. People that want something different, something that they can't get at just a run-of-the-mill practice, they're going to come here."

Client education is key. Lautzenhiser says she informs pet owners that the stem cells come from the dog's tissue, so it isn't something likely to cause rejection. The clinic uses general anesthesia to harvest the cells, which can be a concern to pet owners, but it's also an opportunity for Lautzenhiser to tell them about the AAHA best practices that the clinic uses. Veterinarians using VetStem harvest fat stem cells and send them to VetStem for processing. Then, the pet is injected with the regenerative cells. The entire process and recovery is less invasive than surgery.

The third challenge relates to cost, and that's something Lautzenhiser says may take time for pet owners to come around on. "In our area, people don't have a lot of comparisons," she says. For instance, many times people will compare prices of services that their neighbors may have used. With a relatively new procedure such as VetStem, it's yet to gain that traction from word of mouth. "That's how you get things happening," she says. "People do it and you start talking about it. That is what makes something really take off."

Antigo Veterinary Clinic offers wellness plans, credit and some internal financing costs to help customers. She says they are also emphasizing pet insurance. "It's important to get someone on board with pet insurance when the pet is young, because they are most likely to comply with treatment recommendations when the pet is older," she says.


Though they just began stem cell therapies this year, Lautzenhiser believes the investments they are making in the clinic today are setting a foundation for their future client base.

"It'll help us get recognized more as the cutting edge practice in the area," she says. "We have a new competitor, and I think this will set us apart from them. People that want something different, something that they can't get at just a run-of-the-mill practice, they're going to come here." ■



Proactive Approach to Heartworm Prevention





Vigilance is the key to effective heartworm prevention

All it takes is one.

A single dog infected with heartworm can enter a community and turn everything upside down.

Dr. Les Pelfrey, TVC Co-op Owner of Stanley Veterinary Clinic, Overland Park, Kansas has seen it before. He used to practice in a small town in western Kansas. Hardly anyone had their dog on a heartworm preventive, he says. But the area had lots of mosquitos, and lots of people who moved in and out of town because of the feedlot industry. Before he moved, Dr. Pelfrey says you could already notice the signs that an infected dog had come into town.

"You could walk outside your house and hear the dogs coughing in the neighborhoods," he says. "The veterinarian who was still there after I left said he had to treat over 300 dogs with heartworm in a year. And that's in a town of 4,500

"Many clients will say, 'If you check the stool on a dog, do you see any heartworms?' That's how undereducated most people are. People often associate heartworms with intestinal worms."

— Dr. Les Pelfrey

people. So, all it takes is that one dog to come into the environment of the mosquito, and a bunch of host dogs that are under-protected, and it will spread."

Dr. Pelfrey keeps that lesson in mind when advising his clients at Stanley Veterinary Clinic.

Education

The best tool for advising clients is education. Dr. Pelfrey says that he doesn't try to pressure people with the fear factor of what heartworm disease can do, but has found over the years that there are a lot of misconceptions about heartworms.

"Many clients will say, 'If you check the stool on a dog, do you see any heartworms?' That's how undereducated most people are. People often associate heartworms with intestinal worms."

Dr. Pelfrey and his staff use videos and handouts to show clients the adult heartworms in the dog's heart to help them grasp what can happen if their pet becomes infected.

Stanley Veterinary Clinic tests about 3,500 dogs a year for heartworm, and there are a couple positive tests each year. "We are in a bit of a bubble," Dr. Pelfrey says. "We don't have that sick dog in the community that's bringing it to everybody else. But, you get into other parts of the city, maybe ten miles from here, and you may have 10 percent of the dogs testing positive for heartworm. And a lot of those dogs were never on preventive. It just takes that one dog that's infected to come into the community."

"If there is a rebate available, your practice should be filling out the forms for your clients and submitting it on their behalf."

Veterinary clinics must be ever-vigilant and proactive in promoting preventives to their client base. For instance, heartworms are a big problem in the Mississippi Delta region, where they have more of a mosquito problem pretty much year-round. There are even reports of a resistant strain of heartworm disease that started down in the Delta during hurricane season and has slowly spread in shelter dogs in areas like Minnesota and Wisconsin, Dr. Pelfrey says. There is always a chance it could spread west as well.

Counting the cost

One way to be proactive with heartworm preventives is to show clients a cost comparison of how much it would cost to be on year-round preventives vs. if their pet becomes infected. Preventives cost just a few dollars per month. The cost to treat a positive case, however, is much higher. "Costs vary, but treatment for heartworms is generally in the hundreds of dollars," Dr. Pelfrey says. "For an average case of heartworm in a dog, an uncomplicated case could be \$700 to treat if you follow protocols."



Heartworm facts

Did you know?

- If left untreated, heartworm disease can result in your dog's death.
- Heartworms can grow to 16 inches in length and there can be as many as 250 heartworms in a dog's vital organs.
- Your dog can have no symptoms until heartworms are well-established.
- Almost 300,000 dogs in the U.S. are infected with heartworms each year.
- It is difficult, especially on your dog, to treat heartworms once established. It is much easier and less expensive to prevent heartworms than to treat them.
- Other kinds of worms that dogs can get include hookworms, roundworms, tapeworms, and whipworms.

Source: The Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC). For more information, visit <http://www.petsandparasites.org>

And even though you can treat and get rid of the heartworm, there are lots of lingering health issues. According to the American Heartworm Association, heartworm disease causes lasting damage to the heart, lungs and arteries, and can affect the dog's health and quality of life long after the parasites are gone. For this reason, prevention is by far the best option, and treatment – when needed – should be administered as early in the course of the disease as possible.

"You still have a lot of pathology that occurs after the treatment," says Dr. Pelfrey.

Human health is also a consideration. Heartworm preventives like Merck's Tri-Heart Plus (ivermectin/pyrantel) <https://theveterinarycooperative.coop/membersonly/vendors/merck-animal-health> also help treat for intestinal parasites. "As guardians of our children, our pets can present parasites to our family, so it's good medicine to try and prevent that zoonotic issue so we can keep intestinal parasites from our pets and kids."

Value-added services

Dr. Pelfrey says there are several things that independent practices can do to capture more sales of heartworm preventive:

"As guardians of our children, our pets can present parasites to our family, so it's good medicine to try and prevent that zoonotic issue so we can keep intestinal parasites from our pets and kids."

Avoid mixed messages with too many products. "You need to champion one heartworm preventive, and then everyone that works at your practice agrees to use it, so that's the one everybody talks about," Dr. Pelfrey says. "Otherwise you will have mixed messages."

Help your clients with savings. Veterinary clinics should be proactive on behalf of the customer for any savings or rebates they can get for their purchase, Dr. Pelfrey says. "If there is a rebate available, your practice should be filling out the forms for your clients and submitting it on their behalf," he says. "Otherwise it won't happen. That's just a value-add service."

Explain the value of warranties. Many people don't understand vaccine and preventive warranties, and the benefits of purchasing these products through their veterinary clinic. "If you are treating your dog and have the invoice history of purchasing a heartworm preventive every six months, the manufacturers will stand behind their product."

Price it right. "Maintaining a price point near what online retailers and big box stores offer will keep independent practices competitive." ■

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1. Pasloske K et al. The bioequivalence of a single intravenous administration of the anesthetic alfaxalone in cyclodextrin versus alfaxalone in cyclodextrin plus preservatives in cats. J Vet Pharmacol Ther 2018;41(3):437-446. For complete Alfaxan reference information contact Jurox Customer Service at 1-844-253-2926 and request a copy of the Alfaxan Resource Guide.



Managing Diabetes

How veterinary practices can help clients from a diabetes diagnosis to healthy outcomes with home management



Pet owners are spending more money than ever before on their little loved ones. Unfortunately, there have been some unintended health-related consequences to the pampering.

One issue that veterinarians can't ignore is pet obesity. According to an Association for Pet Obesity Prevention 2017 clinical survey, 56 percent of dogs and 60 percent of cats were classified as clinically overweight by their veterinary healthcare professional. That equals an estimated 50.2 million dogs and 56.5 million cats are too heavy, based on 2017 pet population projections provided by the American Pet Products Association (APPA).

Obesity in pets can lead to all sorts of health issues, including skin disorders, chronic inflammation, and respiratory issues. It can also open the door to the emergence of chronic illness, such as diabetes mellitus. Matthew D. Clark, DVM, Classen View Veterinary Clinic, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma says

of the diabetes cases diagnosed at his clinic, probably 60 to 75 percent of them are obesity related.

"We do see some pets that may also have something like Cushing's disease and develop diabetes, or they are senior pets and there doesn't seem to be any reason otherwise," says Clark, a TVC Co-op Owner. "But probably the vast majority of the time the pet is obese."

On the case

Fortunately, diabetes is more manageable if it is detected early and managed with the help of a veterinarian, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Clark says they have a couple dozen clients they are currently managing for diabetes. Classen View sees anywhere from 5 to 10 diabetic pets every couple of weeks, with a handful of new cases coming in every month.

For a lot of pet owners, the diagnosis can be pretty intimidating. Clark says some pet owners who have diabetes themselves or a family member with diabetes might be a little bit more prepared to handle it, but “we definitely see a lot of pet owners who learn their pet is diabetic and they right off the bat think it’s going to be a death sentence, and they’re not going to be able to treat or manage it.” There is generally a lot of education that follows the diagnosis, Clark says. “We tell them, ‘Yes we’ve got to manage this, but it’s not as bad as you think.’”

Once the veterinarian has gone through the basics of the disease, they will map out a care plan. “We get them started on insulin and teach them how to give the shots, what to look for as far as too much or too little of the insulin, things like that.



The home management aspect of it. Then, we will usually have them bring that pet back in a week to get the first glucose curve and make sure that everything is reasonable.”

The initial visit and first glucose curves are usually where the most cost for the pet owner comes in. “Once we get everything set up where it needs to be, then it’s just maintenance,” says Clark. “We’ll generally talk about getting them on foods specific for diabetic pets, as well as maybe losing weight if that is part of their problem, or if they are dealing with other concurrent issues.”

Compliance can depend on several factors. “It really depends on how they tend to do probably in that first couple weeks to a month,” says Clark. “I see some owners who get through that beginning stage and the compliance is extremely poor. They don’t want to bring their pet in for rechecks, or they can’t give the insulin, things like that.”

However, for most pet owners, once they feel comfortable giving the insulin and keeping track of things at home, compliance has been good, Clark says.

“Some pets are easy to manage,” he says. “It only takes 1-2 movements with the insulin to get everything where it

needs to be. There are some pets where it will take just a few months to get them in a good position. So after that we may bring them in for glucose curves depending on the situation every couple of weeks to a month for a little bit, but then once everything is set up and where it needs to be, we can teach them how to test at home and we’ll see the pet every three to six months.”

Pet-specific

The veterinary clinic uses Vetsulin “Vetsulin makes it easy for a couple reasons,” says Clark. “One, it tends to be a lot cheaper than human insulin. Depending on what kind you are using, human insulin can be upwards of \$200-300 a bottle. Vetsulin is usually quite a bit cheaper.”

It’s also helpful to have a product designed specifically for dogs and cats, so veterinarians know it has been tested for them. “I know I am getting the right amounts. We’re not using a human product that we’ve had to tweak for dogs and cats; we’re using medication specific for them. It will also allow for keeping up with rechecks and glucose curves, because we are the ones refilling the medication.”

Plus, veterinarians can track whether they’ve checked the pet’s numbers recently in-house. Or, if the pet owner is checking the numbers at home, the veterinary clinic can review with the client to see if everything looks good. “We are not going through a pharmacist where we may not necessarily be hearing if they are having issues.”

Keeping it in-house

By managing diabetes cases in-house, from a client perspective it allows them to know that the same person who is doing their vaccines and checking their pet’s ears is the same one who is managing the diabetes, Clark says. They are only having to go to one veterinary clinic for all of their needs, rather than multiple trips to multiple locations. “Obviously with that dynamic, you’re building a better relationship with them.”

The business element is tied into that relationship, with the money being spent on exams, insulin, syringes and retests staying with the veterinary clinic. “The best business financially for the clinic is also helpful for the client.” ■

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Inventory Turns over Margin?



By Rich Morris

The animal health marketplace used to be driven

purely on margin. In the past, veterinary practices could do OK as businesses and make a decent amount of money by simply charging 50 percent margin for everything. Competitors – other local, independent practices – were doing it, after all. Veterinary practices were almost the exclusive providers of what pet owners wanted – veterinary services and products. So sure, slapping a 50 percent margin on everything was the way to go.

However, as time goes on, businesses and the marketplaces they operate in will mature. The animal health marketplace has gotten much more sophisticated. Enter PetSmart, enter Petco, enter the big box stores and online retailers being run by sophisticated businesspeople who understand that unless you have a unique product or service, a 50 percent margin on everything will not work.

These businesses aren't focused on margin, but turns – charging less margin, but making more money because they are capturing more and more market share.

Successful practices in the future will need to make the shift from margins to turns.

Here's one example. You are selling a flea & tick product that lasts three months. If you sell it for \$100 at a 50 percent margin, then you put \$50 in your pocket. But what happens if that client doesn't come back to you for the other three quarters of the year? Rather, they find the product at PetSmart, who is selling it at a much smaller margin.

Let's say instead of charging 50 percent margin, you charge 33 percent. It's less money on the first transaction, but the chances of you getting a second, third, and regularly occurring purchases will go way up. So, you either sell one item for \$100 at a 50 percent margin and make \$50, or, you sell it for \$75 at a 33 percent margin, get the yearly purchases from the client and make \$100. You've made less margin, but put more money in your pocket, stopped the client from thinking you are

With an online pharmacy you can sell clients something and sign them up for an auto reminder. Those clicks will be money in your pocket. Even though it's at a lower margin, it's a much better scenario than not selling at all.

overpriced, sold more stuff, and solidified a customer.

Turns is a benefit of having an online pharmacy. Consumers are shopping online, so why not have a presence there? With an online pharmacy you can sell clients something and sign them up for an auto reminder. Those clicks will be money in your pocket. Even though it's at a lower margin, it's a much better scenario than not selling at all. With an online pharmacy, you don't have to have as much product in-house, and you can compete for those online sales with the big box stores.

The typical pet owner spends \$1,000 on pet products and services, and the typical veterinary clinic will get about \$200 of that. By our estimations, TVC Best Practice members, using solutions such as online pharmacies and sophisticated

business practices such as turns, will capture upwards of \$450 of the spend. Finding ways to keep your clients' pet spending within the clinic is the way to stay successful in today's marketplace.



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Adapting to Market Changes



TVC Co-op Owner At Home Veterinary Services has benefited from frequent evaluations and making changes to the way they do business

For TVC Co-op Owner Ryan Des-

Jardins and Portland, Ore.-based At Home Veterinary Services, assessing the clinic's business model isn't considered a hassle or hindrance to their day-to-day functions. Because of the nature of their clinic, they have to adapt to market changes, probably faster than most veterinary clinics. Which means they have to be ready to pivot, constantly.

"We (the owners) try to evaluate things at the end of each month," DesJardins says. "We aren't a traditional clinic and we aren't a traditional mobile clinic either, so there

"Being willing to make 'pivots' occasionally and morph the practice, although scary sometimes, has been good for their practice. It's also something for traditional clinics to consider."

isn't a lot of data out there to really compare us with. We've had to make small 'pivots' in our business model periodically as we grow, and over time we've even changed the focus of our practice."

According to DesJardins, At Home Veterinary Services has changed its focus from general companion animal care to geriatrics, palliative and hospice care. "And soon we'll be adding rehab as well," he says. "We still do general wellness, but it has become a much smaller part of our practice."

DesJardins says being willing to make "pivots" occasionally and morph the practice, although scary sometimes, has been good for their practice. It's also something for traditional clinics to consider. Sometimes minor changes can make a big impact in practice management and customer satisfaction. DesJardins shared one pivot in particular that helped At Home Veterinary Services.

Merchant account providers

Finding the right merchant account provider was something At Home Veterinary Services had to get right for their business model to succeed. Unfortunately, when they first got into business, they didn't have the contacts or know what to look for in a merchant account provider, or how much different one provider might be from another one.

DesJardins says those first experiences with merchant account providers were frustrating. "When I've looked into it for comparison, other merchant account salespeople often said they could save us money, or meet what we were doing but provide better service, or something like that," he recalls. "I'd ask them to send me details, and it was often partial information. I'd ask them to send a complete contract, and it was multiple pages full of fine print, hidden fees – and in the end wasn't saving us anything. Instead, I had just wasted a whole lot of time."

However, through TVC, they were able to connect with Harbortouch. Their experience with Harbortouch was the exact opposite of his previous encounters with merchant account providers, he says.

“Very simple forms, straightforward fees, and excellent communication,” he says. “It was a very good experience.”

At Home Veterinary Services uses Harbortouch’s mobile S90 terminals, which allows them to accept payment at a client’s home at the time of service. “This allows our staff to finish and close the invoices without the need to do it later,” he says. “It also means that we take payment right at the time of service.”

“I think not being afraid to change something, such as supply vendors, service providers, merchant services, and anywhere else you are spending money, is the real issue.”

– Ryan DesJardins

Harbortouch also helped the clinic get integrated with authorize.net, “which allows us to have a secure payment portal on our website and a virtual terminal for phone in payments,” says DesJardins. “Authorize.net also allows us to set up recurring payments for some services as well.”

The experience and convenience for customers has been positive, he says. “Obviously, having the ability to make a payment right at the time of service in their home is also convenient for the customers as they don’t have to call in to make a payment over the phone,” he says. “We mail out a lot of medications, so when a customer receives the invoice, they can go right online and make payment through our website portal.”

The savings through TVC and Harbortouch have been incredible, DesJardins says. “It reduced our merchant fees by almost half, which adds up to several thousand each year over our previous merchant provider.”

Small adjustments

DesJardins offered some more examples of ways their clinic has adjusted their business practices.

Scheduling. “We made some small adjustments to our scheduling to allow our doctors to ‘catch up’ before they get behind on a particular day,” he says. “They are still able to make as many visits in a day as they normally do, but making some small adjustments helps them be more efficient and perhaps not require them to be staying extra hours to complete charts.”

DesJardins says they’ve also recently updated their practice management software to a more modern system that integrates with many other services. “This has saved an incredible amount of time for client services, the technicians and doctors.”

Customer experience. DesJardins says they are currently adding new ways for their clients to connect, such as video calls and a new client/patient portal that is more user friendly than their previous one with access to more information. “We have also provided some new services that our clients were interested in, based upon our annual customer survey, and some new ways for customers to customize how they pay for care, similar to wellness plans but with a focus on palliative and hospice care,” he says.

Savings. One of the biggest ways that At Home Veterinary Services found to save money is to take advantage of all the possible benefits through TVC,

DesJardins says. “Not every program is going to fit every practice, but researching and being willing to make a change to your normal purchasing habits can make a really big difference over time.”

DesJardins says that there is an underlying theme on why some clinics may be hesitant to really do a deep dive in assessing their business model. “I think not being afraid to change something, such as supply vendors, service providers, merchant services, and anywhere else you are spending money, is the real issue,” he says. “We sometimes get hung up on change and the ‘hassle,’ when in reality a little bit of ‘hassle’ may not only increase profits, but it may also increase personal time as well, due to increased efficiency.” ■



Are You Picking up Pennies, but Missing the Dollars?

By Rich Morris

Price shopping, and savings, are important.

But from what I have seen in veterinary practices, price shopping may be consuming more time than it should.

First, consider that many of the products you purchase are locked into a price point. Sixty percent of all dollars of medical supplies purchased from a distributor are price locked or comely also known as “price floored”. That’s 60 percent of all the dollars, not necessarily the individual SKUs (Shelf Stocking Units or each part number you purchase). It may be a smaller number of SKUs, but the items that are purchased regularly. The different distributors could sell these products for more, but by selling

it at the floor they know they are selling it for what everybody else is.

So with price shopping, you will probably only get savings from 40 percent of the products your overall savings would be lucky to average 5 percent. Try it for a two-week period to see what kind of savings you’re really getting through price shopping. It might be 15 percent off this item and 5 percent off this item and 3 percent off this – but when you get down to the end, it’s really a small percentage overall.

Yes, savings are important. But imagine if that same employee who is trying to find you the cheaper price focused instead on bringing in 1-2 customers every week, or a customer every other week. Multiply that by how many dollars you could get from bringing an extra client. What is that worth? Bringing in new clients is likely worth more money to the bottom line than using that time toward price shopping. Especially if you rely on TVC to pick up the big dollars for you.

Be efficient

Margins are shrinking. These days you need to have a more efficient office that maximizes every hour of every employee’s workday. You need to have an efficient office that uses its people to do outward bound marketing calls



to bring in new or existing customers, and to spend the appropriate time with those customers.

One way to free up more time is through more efficient ordering. I recommend you get into the practice of checking and ordering supplies once a week. If you start getting into the practice of ordering once a week and you run out of a product midweek, then your immediate reaction should be to evaluate. Do you need to order 20-30 of the product a week instead of 10? Who is using the product the most, and why? Also, getting into a rhythm of ordering will highlight the fact you've got some leakage. Take the next steps to figure out who is responsible for that leakage. Unfortunately, it could be because of theft, and you would have never known had you not taken steps to better monitor your inventory.

Ordering online is efficient. However, in this industry, online ordering has not caught up to the rest of the world. We're still behind the curve. From what I have seen, most distributors do not have an online ordering system that shows you the specials, such as Buy One, Get One Free. This is another reason why you want to order once a week. You can make a list, call your distributor rep and ask what's on special before you order.

This also applies to online ordering programs. These services do not have the complete picture to do an accurate comparison. Whether you are using a program or have three websites on three different screens to compare prices, chances are the specials aren't being taken into account. You're not comparing apples to apples.

You're also not comparing what TVC is offering, such as member-only rebates, discounts, and special pricing programs. Something may look 5 percent cheaper through an ordering site, but it's not factoring in the 10 percent TVC rebate.

For instance, when an ordering service program pulls data from distributor websites to compare, one distributor site

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may not have their pricing technology up to date, and it only lists suggested veterinary pricing on their website and does not list special group pricing that applies to the TVC member. Therefore, you will see the Suggested Vet Price of \$65, but not the TVC member price of \$59. Another distributor's website may show the TVC member price of \$59, however, when the pricing service pulled the data, they did not know there was a manufacturer special of Buy 4, Get 1 Free – making the net price \$47.20.

You may have joined TVC so you didn't have to price shop. Is TVC going to be lowest on everything? No, but you might be picking up pennies and missing the dollars. If you purchase from TVC vendors, you will be picking up most of the savings. For you to try and pick up those last pennies, you're missing the dollars you would get from trying to get clients to come in.

Contact us for the best solutions. We have a new and improved website, that allows you to use a search function to find the TVC vendor that will save you money on the products you need. Take advantage of what TVC has to offer. ■





Getting Real About Retail

The clinical and business benefits of embracing pet retail sales in your practice

Pet retail is big business.

According to the American Pet Products Association, \$14.71 billion was spent on items such as beds, collars, leashes, toys, travel items, clothing, food and water bowls, and other accessories. Big box stores like PetSmart and Petco are lined with aisle after aisle of these products.

But that doesn't mean that independent veterinarians have to surrender the sales opportunities that retail products could present their practices. If anything, tying the clinical benefits of these products with the expertise and veterinarian-client relationship can give TVC owners an advantage in the marketplace.



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- ✓ Prevents heartworm disease **and** treats & controls roundworms, hookworms & tapeworms
- ✓ First feline product to combine eprinomectin & praziquantel
- ✓ Approved for cats and kittens as young as 7 weeks of age, weighing as little as 1.8 lbs
- ✓ Easy-to-use, stress-free applicator
- ✓ Rx product available through Veterinarians



IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: For topical use only. Side effects may include emesis, anorexia, lethargy, and hair changes and skin reactions at the site of application. If ingested, hypersalivation, vomiting and lethargy may be observed. The safety of CENTRAGARD has not been tested in kittens less than 7 weeks of age or less than 1.8 lbs.



CENTRAGARD is a Merial product. Merial is now part of Boehringer Ingelheim.

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Centragard™
(eprinomectin and praziquantel
transdermal solution)

Centragard™

(epinomectin and praziquantel
transdermal solution)

CAUTION: Federal (USA) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Description:

CENTRAGARD is a transdermal solution containing eprinomectin and praziquantel available in 0.3 mL and 0.9 mL unit applicators to treat cats from 1.8 lbs to 33 lbs. Each mL of CENTRAGARD contains 4 mg of eprinomectin and 83 mg of praziquantel, as well as the inactive ingredients (dimethyl isosorbide, glycerol formal, and butylated hydroxytoluene). Eprinomectin belongs to the avermectin class of anthelmintics and is a mixture of homologous components referred to as eprinomectin B1a and B1b. Praziquantel is a pyrazinoisoquinoline anthelmintic.

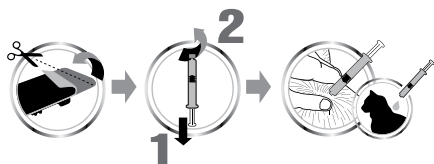
Indications:

CENTRAGARD is indicated for the prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, and for the treatment and control of roundworms (adult and fourth stage larval *Toxocara cati*), hookworms (adult and fourth stage larval *Ancylostoma tubaeforme*, adult *Ancylostoma braziliense*), and tapeworms (adult *Dipylidium caninum* and *Echinococcus multilocularis*) in cats and kittens 7 weeks of age and older and 1.8 lbs or greater.

Dosage and Administration:

CENTRAGARD is dosed at a minimum of 0.055 mL/lb (0.12 mL/kg), which delivers a minimum dose of 0.23 mg/lb eprinomectin and 4.55 mg/lb praziquantel. Administer the entire contents of a CENTRAGARD unit applicator topically once a month as specified in the following table:

Cat Weight (lb)	Volume (mL)	Eprinomectin (mg)	Praziquantel (mg)
1.8-5.5	0.3	1.2	24.9
5.6-16.5	0.9	3.6	74.7
16.6-22.0	0.3+0.9	4.8	99.6
22.1-33.0	0.9+0.9	7.2	149.4



To apply CENTRAGARD pull back the plunger of the unit applicator slightly and remove the cap. Part the hair in one spot on the midline of the neck between the base of the skull and the shoulder blades, place the tip of the unit applicator on the skin and apply the contents directly on the skin. If the weight of the cat requires a second application, apply the contents in the same manner as described above in the same location. Discard applicator after use.

Heartworm Prevention:

For prevention of heartworm disease, CENTRAGARD should be administered once a month. CENTRAGARD may be administered year round or at a minimum, should start 1 month before the cat's first expected exposure to mosquitoes and continuing at monthly intervals until at least one month after the cat's last exposure to mosquitoes. If a dose is missed and a 30-day interval between doses is exceeded, administer CENTRAGARD immediately and resume the monthly dosing schedule.

When replacing another monthly heartworm preventive product in a heartworm prevention program, the first treatment with CENTRAGARD should be given within one month of the last dose of the former medication. At the discretion of the veterinarian, cats older than 6 months of age may be tested to determine the presence of existing heartworm infection before treatment with CENTRAGARD.

Treatment and Control of Roundworms, Hookworms and Tapeworms:

CENTRAGARD treats and controls roundworms (adult and fourth stage larval *Toxocara cati*), hookworms (adult and fourth stage larval *Ancylostoma tubaeforme*, adult *Ancylostoma braziliense*), and tapeworms (adult *Dipylidium caninum* and *Echinococcus multilocularis*) after a single administration or when given monthly as part of a heartworm prevention program. Cats may be exposed to and can become infected with roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworms throughout the year, regardless of season or climate. Clients should be advised of appropriate measures to prevent reinfection of their cat with intestinal parasites. Because the prepatent period for *E. multilocularis* may be as short as 26 days, cats treated at the labeled monthly intervals may become reinfected and shed eggs between treatments.

Human Warning:

Not for human use. Keep out of reach of children. Avoid contact with the application site for 5 hours following treatment. Wash hands after administering the product. If the product accidentally gets into the eyes, flush thoroughly with water. In case of accidental ingestion, or if skin or eye irritation occurs, contact a poison control center or physician for treatment advice.

Precautions:

Do not administer orally. Cats may salivate excessively and vomit if CENTRAGARD is accidentally administered orally or is ingested through licking/grooming the application site (see ANIMAL SAFETY).

The safety of CENTRAGARD has not been tested in breeding, pregnant or lactating cats.

The safety of CENTRAGARD has not been tested in kittens less than 7-9 weeks of age or weighing less than 1.8 lbs (0.8 kg).

Adverse Reactions:

In a well-controlled field study emesis, anorexia, lethargy, temporary clumping or spiking of the hair, or mild, transient skin reactions (itching, hair loss) were reported. When cats licked the application site after treatment, temporary excessive salivation was observed. Oral ingestion of CENTRAGARD may also result in hypersalivation, vomiting and/or lethargy. In margin of safety studies, transient neurological signs such as ataxia, disorientation, lethargy, and pupil dilation were observed in some cats. Correct application will minimize the occurrence of such events.

To report suspected adverse events, for technical assistance or to obtain a copy of the SDS, contact Merial at 1-888-637-4251.

For additional information about adverse drug experience reporting for animal drugs, contact FDA at 1-888-FDA-VETS or online at <http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth>.

The Safety Data Sheet (SDS) provides additional occupational safety information. For customer service or to obtain product information, including the SDS, call 1-888-637-4251.

Information for Owner or Person Treating Animal:

Echinococcus multilocularis is a tapeworm found in wild canids and domestic cats. *E. multilocularis* can infect humans and cause serious disease (alveolar hydatid disease). Owners of cats living in areas where *E. multilocularis* are endemic should be instructed on how to minimize their risk of exposure to this parasite, as well as their cat's risk of exposure. Although ML-635 was 100% effective in laboratory studies in cats against *E. multilocularis*, no studies have been conducted to show that the use of this product will decrease the incidence of alveolar hydatid disease in humans. Because the prepatent period for *E. multilocularis* may be as short as 26 days, cats treated at the labeled monthly intervals may become reinfected and shed eggs between treatments.

Mode of Action:

Eprinomectin binds to glutamate gated chloride channels that are present in invertebrate nerve and muscle cells and increases the permeability of the cell membrane to chloride ions that triggers hyperpolarization of the nerve or muscle cell resulting in paralysis and death of the parasite.

Praziquantel's mode of action is not precisely known but treated tapeworms undergo muscular paralysis accompanied by a rapid influx of calcium ions and the disruption of the tegument.

Effectiveness:

Effectiveness studies were conducted with an early formulation (ML-635), containing 8.3% fipronil, 0.4% eprinomectin, 8.3% praziquantel, and 10% (*S*)-methoprene. The doses of eprinomectin and praziquantel in ML-635 are equivalent to the final formulation of CENTRAGARD (epinomectin and praziquantel transdermal solution).

Heartworm Disease Prevention:

In well-controlled laboratory studies, ML-635 provided 100% effectiveness against induced heartworm infections after a single application.

Treatment and Control of Roundworms, Hookworms, and Tapeworms:

In well-controlled laboratory studies, ML-635 provided >90% effectiveness against natural and/or induced roundworm (adult and fourth stage larval *Toxocara cati*); hookworm (adult and fourth stage larval *Ancylostoma tubaeforme*, adult *Ancylostoma braziliense*), and adult tapeworm (*Dipylidium caninum*; *Echinococcus multilocularis*) infections.

Animal Safety:

Margin of Safety Study: A combination of fipronil, eprinomectin, praziquantel, and (*S*)-methoprene was applied topically to 7 to 9 week old healthy kittens at 1, 3, or 5X the maximum dose (8 cats/group) six times at 28 day intervals. One 5X kitten exhibited ataxia, disorientation, and lethargy for 12 hours and exhibited pupil dilation for 24 hours following the 3rd treatment. This 5X kitten exhibited ataxia, disorientation, and lethargy for 6 hours, and moderate pupil dilation for 24 hours following the 4th treatment, and had pupil dilation following the 5th treatment. Hypersalivation was observed for one hour for one 5X kitten following the 1st treatment and one 3X kitten following the 4th treatment. One 5X kitten had slow pupillary light responses for one day after one treatment and one 3X kitten had slow pupillary light responses for 3 hours after one treatment. One control cat had marked pupil dilation and slow pupillary light responses lasting two hours after one treatment. Immediately post-treatment cats in all groups scratched and groomed the application site.

Study in Heartworm Positive Cats: Three groups (0X, 1X and 3X) of 12 young, adult cats, 4.7 to 6.6 months of age, were experimentally infected with adult heartworms (*D. immitis*) by venous transplantation. All cats were negative for heartworm antibody, antigen and microfilariae prior to transplantation. Two weeks after transplantation, immunoserology verified positive antigen and the presence of microfilaria in all enrolled cats. A combination of fipronil, eprinomectin, praziquantel, and (*S*)-methoprene was applied topically to cats at 1X or 3X the maximum exposure dose once every 28 days for three consecutive treatments. One cat in the 1X group exhibited cyanotic mucous membranes and tachypnea for 24 hours following the first treatment. The cat recovered and exhibited no abnormal signs following two subsequent treatments. There was no difference between the treatment groups in the number of adult *D. immitis* recovered at the end of the study.

Oral Administration Study: Oral tolerance was evaluated to assess the effects of accidental oral ingestion. Sixteen cats (8 male and 8 female) ranging in age from 9 - 10 months were studied. Eight cats were orally administered a combination of fipronil, eprinomectin, praziquantel, and (*S*)-methoprene at 1X the maximum exposure dose; the 8 control cats were sham dosed. All 8 treated cats immediately exhibited hypersalivation after oral administration, and 2 cats vomited and 3 cats were lethargic during the 1-2 hour post-treatment observations. Treated cats continued to hypersalivate and lick lips/mouth for 1-2 hours after oral administration. Cats were monitored for 14 days thereafter, during which one treated cat vomited on Day 12.

Storage Information:

Store at or below 30°C (86°F) with excursions permitted to 40°C (104°F). Protect from light.

How Supplied:

CENTRAGARD is packaged as a single dose in 0.3 mL (for cats 1.8 – 5.5 lb) and 0.9 mL (for cats 5.6 – 16.5 lb) applicators.

Each size applicator is available in cartons containing 1, 3 or 6 applications.

NADA 141-492, Approved by FDA

Manufactured for:
Merial, Inc.,
Duluth, GA 30096-4640
USA
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TVC Co-op Owner Carol Rowe, DVM, Blue Ridge Pet Clinic, Lakeside, Ariz., says selling retail items such as Kong collars and toys is an effective way to keep pet parents more involved with their veterinary practice and less so with big box retailers. “I started stocking the inflatable Kong collars because people were asking for them and were saying ‘I’m going to buy an inflatable,’” Dr. Rowe says. “So I would tell them ‘I can save you a trip – I’ve got them here.’ I also have the fillable toys available for purchase to keep clients out of stores.”

Dr. Rowe and the clinic staff listen to what products their clients prefer. Blue Ridge Pet Clinic sells Kong’s Calmer collars and the inflatable Kong Cloud collar. “People like the soft Calmer collar more than the hard clear plastic ones,” Dr. Rowe says. “People started asking for the inflatable collars, so I started stocking the Kong Cloud collar. Some people think it’s so much more kind or humane.”

Clinical benefits

Dr. Rowe says that Blue Ridge Pet Clinic uses and offers these products because they are tied to a larger clinical strategy. “We use them out of necessity to keep the dogs from licking surgical sites,” Dr. Rowe says. The collars are included in the treatment plan with every spay and neuter surgery, or any other surgery where licking is a risk.

“We are also Fear Free certified, so we use the Kong toys to present treats to dogs like the Stuff’N Easy,” Dr. Rowe says. “We fill little Kong toys with that so that it takes them a while to lick it out.”

“I started stocking the inflatable Kong collars because people were asking for them and were saying ‘I’m going to buy an inflatable. So I would tell them ‘I can save you a trip – I’ve got them here.’ I also have the fillable toys available for purchase to keep clients out of stores.”

Dr. Rowe also recommends the Kong toys at home for anxious dogs. “They’re used in the exam room with Stuff’N Easy to win dogs over during the exam, so they’re in the exam room,” she says. “The fillable Kong toys are available for purchase at the clinic; can be filled with peanut butter or cheese; good for Fear Free.”

The Fear Free initiative was founded by Dr. Marty Becker, and currently involves a 160-member advisory panel com-

prised of board-certified veterinary behaviorists, veterinary technician behavior specialists, board certified veterinary anesthetists, well-known veterinary practice management experts, and boarded veterinary practitioners experienced in Fear Free methods, hospital and animal shelter designers, and other experts. The program offers veterinary professionals the opportunity to receive CE as well as certification in Fear Free veterinary practice from the parking lot to the exam room and beyond

Dr. Rowe says through the Fear Free initiative she and her staff have learned a lot of good techniques to make the patients like coming to the clinic. Blue Ridge veterinarians and staff emphasize taking time and being patient with the pets, and trying to help teach the owners to do the same thing. Pet retail products are one tool that can enhance that aspect of the veterinary practice.

“It’s the veterinary-client relationship that gives us the advantage,” Dr. Rowe says. “It’s focusing on the relationship with the owner and the pet. I see that as the advantage over big box stores. It also just makes it a whole lot more fun to practice.” ■



The Profitable Practice

How membership in a cooperative can give independent veterinarians an edge

Karla B. Cunningham, DVM, saw the value of a cooperative at a young age. Growing up, her father was a dairy farmer and member of a milk cooperative. She witnessed firsthand the importance of independent, small businesses needing to join together to compete against larger competitors in the marketplace.

"I understood from a very young age that small producers, or independent veterinarians, have struggled to get the same benefits as big farms or big veterinary hospitals," says Cunningham.

Banding together with other independent veterinary practices to get deals, rebates, and partnerships made sense to her, thus her decision to become one of the early TVC Co-op Owners. It's made good business for River's Edge Veterinary Hospital, INC, too.

Outsourcing business savvy

Cunningham says she is like most veterinarians who went to school because they felt a calling to do medicine on animals. However, the thought of business school "makes most of us shudder in our shoes."

Brokering deals is not typically a veterinarian's strong suit. To have someone who has that business acumen to negotiate, and get down to the "brass tacks of a situation" with vendors and their products and services, "is quite impressive," says Cunningham. "I was member 106, one of first to adopt, and I was eager to take advantage of the different deals.

"We use the programs that fit," Cunningham continues. "We're not going to start purchasing something that doesn't fit my business just to have that extra vendor on my list. But,

it just makes senses to look and see what vendors are available to use if you can."

Distributors, manufacturers, service providers – River's Edge has taken advantage of many TVC vendor programs. For instance, River's Edge switched their credit card processor to a TVC vendor, Harbortouch, and saw immediate benefits. "That's easy money you're picking up if you can get a better deal on your credit card provider."



"We're not going to start purchasing something that doesn't fit my business just to have that extra vendor on my list. But, it just makes senses to look and see what vendors are available to use if you can."

– Karla B. Cunningham, DVM

Boost your bottom line

With the TVC programs and rebates in place, Cunningham says there is money left at the end of the year. "Sometimes it makes a difference from being a no-profit practice to being a profitable practice. You can get those better deals."

A lot of times people new to the business world are worried about revenue. While that's important, controlling expenses is just as important, Cunningham says. "If you can save money, and you're spending less money on your products, then that makes all the difference in the world. Then you're getting that rebate check a couple times a year as a bonus too. I never count on it, so whenever I get it, I will ask myself 'What can I use this for?'"

Having money left over means River's Edge can consider purchasing more products. Or even local advertising to attract new clients. The important thing is being a TVC Co-op Owner gives them that option. "Anything that can help your bottom line, and the health of your business, helps lead to growth," says Cunningham. ■



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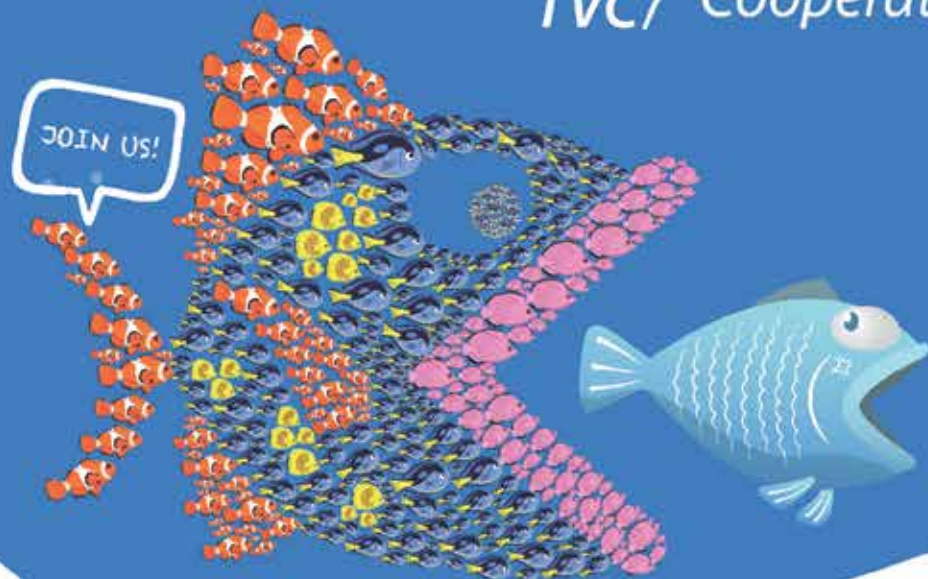


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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed June 18, 2018 at <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2015/p0928-rabies.html>.

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