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# intercom

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## AAHA: Study: Orphaned Kittens Show More Stress

Tony McReynolds



10.15.2020: Orphaned kittens experience more stress than those who are cared for by their mothers, according to a new study from the University of California, Davis (UC Davis).

And it shows.

Many young animals cry in distress when socially isolated, and these cries may help their mother find and retrieve them. Likewise, increased physical activity may help young animals find their way back to their nests.

In the [study](#), the researchers assessed the effects of early maternal separation on the vocalizations and physical activity of 49 kittens (28 orphaned,\* 21 mother-reared; 23 female, 26 male) from 11 litters (5 mother-reared, 6 orphaned). Each kitten was placed alone in a pen away from the rest of the litter and/or mother for two minutes at the age of one week, and again at three weeks. The researchers recorded the number of vocalizations and total physical activity for each kitten.

The orphaned kittens showed increased physical activity and distress calls compared to mother-reared kittens both times, suggesting that maternal separation may lead to long-term changes in stress responses.

Thousands of kittens are orphaned each year, whether through neglect, the death of their mothers, or accidental separation from their mothers. Orphaned kittens often end up in animal shelters or foster homes. The researchers say that understanding the effects of being orphaned on stress responses could improve their care.

*NEWStat* contacted lead author Mikel Delgado, PhD, a postdoctoral researcher on cat behavior at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, to find out more.

***NEWStat:*** What spurred you to do this study?

**Mikel Delgado:** We have been studying the health and behavior of orphaned kittens for a few years now. We're working with these kittens in part to see whether their experiences have any parallels with adverse early life experiences in other animals, including humans. We know that these adverse experiences can impact the later health and behavior of other animals.

We also know that [neonatal] kittens spend a lot of time in contact with their mothers. In other species, that early physical contact with mom is important for the regulation of pain, sleep, and stress responses.

***NEWStat:*** Orphaned kittens may end up being hand-raised by humans in shelters or foster homes. In those cases, are there any benefits to the kittens?

**MD:** We have no empirical studies to tell us for certain what any benefits might be. But, as an example, orphans are hand-fed and do not have to compete for a nipple; they can feed on as much formula as they like without competition. They also may get additional handling by humans while they are in their sensitive period for socialization; this may help them be more ready to bond with humans when they get adopted.

***NEWStat:*** What do you hope will be the major takeaways of this study for *NEWStat* readers?

**MD:** Until we know more about the effects of being orphaned on kittens, we should do everything we can to provide them with a similar environment to that they would experience with mom, such as making sure they are provided with a source of warmth and comfort, gentle handling, and the social company of other kittens. Hopefully, this will give them the best opportunity to cope with an adverse early life experience. Ideally, orphans can get placed with another mother cat, but rescues often don't have available moms who can act as a surrogate.

***NEWStat:*** Where do you go from here in terms of research on orphaned kittens?

**MD:** We [want] to know whether these stress responses continue into later kittenhood or even into adulthood. We're currently looking at how orphans and mother-reared kittens differ in health and behavior during the process of weaning from milk or formula to solid food. Hopefully, in the future, we can do studies that follow kittens into their new homes until they are adults!

*\*All of the kittens and mother cats were cared for in foster homes; no kittens were deliberately orphaned during the course of this study. 🐾*

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## **FDA Holds Virtual Public Meeting to Discuss Potential Approach for Ranking of Antimicrobial Drugs According to Their Importance in Human Medicine: A Risk Management Tool for Antimicrobial Animal Drugs**

10.09.2020: As part of its overall strategy for addressing antimicrobial resistance risks associated with the use of antimicrobial drugs in animals, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is announcing a potential revised process and criteria for ranking antimicrobial drugs based on their importance in human medicine. FDA is committed to ensuring that this ranking process be based on current and sound science, given the role that the ranking of antimicrobials plays in guiding FDA's activities related to managing antimicrobial resistance risks associated with antimicrobial use in animals.

To describe these potential revisions in detail, FDA has published a [concept paper](#), and issued a Request for Comments in the Federal Register, to obtain early public feedback on the content of the paper. FDA also plans to hold a virtual public meeting to present the details and receive additional comments.

The concept paper outlines a potential approach for updating the current list of antimicrobial drugs ranked by their importance in human medicine (commonly referred to as "Appendix A" of FDA's Guidance for Industry (GFI) #152) to take into account improved understanding of antimicrobial resistance and other changes since the ranked list was established in 2003, including changes in available treatment options, changes in human clinical practices and other scientific advancements. GFI #152, "Evaluating the Safety of Antimicrobial New Animal Drugs with Regard to Their Microbiological Effects on Bacteria of Human Health Concerns," is used to support the animal drug approval process and provides a recommended risk assessment methodology for evaluating and mitigating antimicrobial resistance concerns associated with the use of antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals.

While the original ranking criteria in GFI #152 emphasized the treatment of foodborne infections in humans, the potential revised criteria in the concept paper more broadly consider the importance of these drugs in human medicine, based on availability of treatment options and seriousness of human illness. These revised criteria are intended to better characterize the overall importance of a drug for treating human infections, whether or not they are foodborne. However, in addition to this importance ranking, other risk factors would be considered as part of an overall assessment of antimicrobial resistance risks associated with the use of an antimicrobial drug in animals.

The current list of antimicrobial drug medical importance rankings in Appendix A of GFI #152 will continue to be used to support the animal drug evaluation and risk assessment process while the potential revised criteria and rankings detailed in the concept paper are under consideration. If the revised ranking list described in the concept paper were to be adopted by FDA, through guidance, it would replace the list currently included as Appendix A to GFI #152. The revised list would be used to inform the recommended risk assessment methodology provided in GFI #152 and also could be utilized as a risk management tool for informing other FDA initiatives related to the judicious use of medically important antimicrobials in veterinary medicine.

The concept paper is a means to facilitate public comment on one potential approach to revising antimicrobial drug human medical importance rankings and is not intended to be construed as recommendations or guidance. FDA intends to consider all comments received on the concept paper that are submitted in a timely manner before issuing draft guidance for additional public comment.

The virtual public meeting to discuss this potential revised approach to ranking antimicrobial drugs according to their importance in human medicine will be held on November 16, 2020. For additional information about this meeting, including registration and specific questions on which FDA would like to receive comments, please visit: [FDA Public Meeting on Potential Approach for Ranking of Antimicrobial Drugs According to Their Importance in Human Medicine: A Risk Management Tool for Antimicrobial Animal Drugs](#).

### **How to Comment:**

FDA is accepting public comment on "Concept Paper: Potential Approach for Ranking of Antimicrobial Drugs According to Their Importance in Human Medicine: A Risk Management Tool for Antimicrobial New Animal Drugs" October 9, 2020 through January 15, 2021. To electronically submit comments to the docket, visit [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) and type FDA-2020-N-1736 in the search box. To submit comments to the docket by mail, use the following address. Be sure to include docket number FDA-2020-N-1736 on each page of your written comments. 🐾

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**Member Spotlight**  
**G. Diane Shelton, DVM, PhD, DACVIM**  
**(Internal Medicine)**  
**Professor, Department of Pathology**  
**University of California, San Diego**

*Interview Conducted By:*  
*Megan Gibbings, DVM,*  
*SDCVMA President Elect*



**Q: How did your journey into veterinary medicine begin?**

A: When I was young, I was always interested in animals (I loved animals) & science. So just putting the two together I thought “hmmm veterinary medicine would cover both of those,” and that’s how I directed my efforts into veterinary medicine, a love of animals and science.

**Q: What brought you to the UCSD School of Medicine as a veterinarian?**

A: It’s kind of a long story! I graduated in 1979 from the veterinary school at UC Davis and my future husband was also in my class. We both wanted to go on and do internships and residencies. I went to Michigan State as an intern and my husband went to the University of Pennsylvania-- he was interested in surgery. After the internship he decided he wanted to stay at Penn and apply for a residency, so I thought “Okay, what can I do there?”. I applied to several neurology residencies and also internal medicine. He was accepted for a surgery residency at Penn and I was accepted for a medicine residency there also. After our residencies were over, I decided I wanted to do a PhD.

My husband decided he would come back to UC Davis with me and do an advanced surgery residency while I completed my PhD. I did my PhD in comparative pathology with George Cardinet who, at that time, was one of the only professors in the US who had an interest in muscle diseases. At the end of my PhD, my husband wanted to come back to San Diego because he was born and raised here (I’m from Northern California), so I started thinking, “what can I do in San Diego?” As it turned out at the Salk Institute, there was one of the internationally famous researchers on Myasthenia gravis, so I asked him if I could do a post-doc in his laboratory, and he accepted. I worked with him until 1990, and then I developed a friendship with one of the neuropathologists at UCSD and he was able to get me a position in the pathology department. He was very interested in the work I was doing on animal models - both for Myasthenia and neuropathies. I’ve been there ever since. I’m still doing what I love!

**Q: What has been your favorite discovery or advancement with the neuromuscular diseases you study?**

A: Actually, there’s a lot, I can’t say there’s a favorite one. Muscle disease and neuromuscular disease has always been like a calling for me. When I first started, there wasn’t a lot known about neuromuscular diseases in animals. Just being there from the beginning for a lot of the discoveries, like megaesophagus, can be a primary clinical sign of myasthenia gravis alone—just a focal megaesophagus. Finding the basis for some of these problems was very helpful. And identifying the basis of muscle diseases: muscular dystrophies, congenital myopathies, peripheral nerve disease. The spectrum of them is getting larger & larger. Just the identification of these diseases in our animals and now being able to define them and know what they are—that was very exciting. I just can’t narrow it down to one.

**Q: Does the One Health Initiative have any special meaning to you?**

A: Yes, it does because most of the neuromuscular diseases, particularly what we see in dogs, also occur in humans and vice versa; the diseases we see in humans also occur in dogs. The more we look, the more we find. I think diagnosing them in one species provides a lot of information for another species so it’s all one. The diseases are the same, you can’t separate them, so it is special to me.

**Q: What is the most rewarding part of your job?**

A: Finding these diseases and identifying them. Specifically exercise induced collapse in Labradors. We would work up so many of them with muscle biopsies, EMGs, nerve conduction tests— and we’d find nothing. Finally, after the advent of molecular studies, genetics, and DNA

studies we finally figured out what the mutation was. It's interesting because if they're in water they can swim, and they don't collapse (thank goodness). We could never figure it out. As it turns out, there's a mutation in the central nervous system, it's called Dynamin-1 and it's a temperature sensitive mutant so as the temperature goes up, the activity of this enzyme goes down. So that's why the dogs as they exercise the body temperature goes up and the activity of this enzyme goes down and they collapse. They rest, the body temperature becomes normal again, the enzyme activity increases, and the dogs become normal. It was like "Oh! This is explained now, we know what this is!" We worked on that disease for years and until we had genomic sequencing we didn't know, but once we did, it explained everything.

**Q: Is there anything special you think veterinarians in clinical practice should know about diagnosing neuromuscular disease in pets?**

A: One thing (I can't stress enough) is don't ignore the CK values (creatinine kinase). On muscle biopsy, we were able to diagnose a form of muscular dystrophy in Labradors with persistently elevated CK values. Another is where unexplained lameness is not necessarily orthopedic but can be associated with a neuromuscular disease. So that's something else to remember. Muscle diseases are not really common, but they do occur, I think enough so that you should keep them on your differential list for lameness or non-specific muscle atrophy. Don't forget about hypothyroidism and Cushing's syndrome, as they can both result in muscle disease. Stiffness or some degree of exercise intolerance may be related to an underlying endocrine disorder, so you may have a primary or secondary neuromuscular disease.

**Q: What are your hobbies or interests outside of the lab?**

A: I love old movies, especially the noir type, black and white detective movies. I read a lot. I love to travel! Which of course is one of the things we can't do right now!

**Q: Where is your favorite place to travel or vacation?**

A: There's a lot, but I think my all-time favorite was when my husband and I went to Africa. Since I was a child, I always wanted to see the Serengeti. It was fantastic, seeing all the animals it was just amazing. Then we took a low-level trek in Nepal and we saw tigers in the wild. I love anywhere where there's animals. We went to the Galapagos and that was fantastic. Just a year ago, we went to see polar bears in Canada, and they were amazing. Anywhere there's animals, I'm there! We were supposed to go to Sri Lanka in March to see the tigers there and three days before we were supposed to leave, the trip was cancelled due to COVID. I've been home working remotely ever since. Waiting for a vaccine to be available so I can head out there! 🐾

## NEWStat: Study: Pheromones May Be Key To Peace Between Cats And Dogs

Tony McReynolds

10.14.2020: Multipet households are common—but what if some of those pets, specifically cats and dogs, don't get along? A study from the University of Lincoln in the UK suggests that pheromones might be the answer.

[Pheromones](#) are chemicals animals produce that affect the behavior of another animal, generally of the same species. The [study](#), published in the journal *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, is the first to investigate two pheromones' effectiveness in improving the behavior and relationship of dogs and cats sharing a household.

Researchers Miriam Prior, MA, MSc, VetMB, MRCVS, CCAB, and Daniel Mills, RCVS, CCAB, PhD, DECAWBM, conducted the study to examine how pheromone diffusers influenced the interactions between dogs and cats in their homes. Prior and Mills recruited test subjects for the six-week study via social media, online groups, and flyers posted in veterinary hospitals. Pet owners were chosen based on whether or not they perceived there was potential for improvement in the relationship between their cat and dog.

In the parallel, randomized trial, the researchers tested two pheromone products: one that emits calming pheromones for cats, and another that does the same for dogs. Each home was randomly assigned one of the pheromones in an unlabeled diffuser so that neither the participants nor the researchers knew which pheromone was in use in which household.

*NEWStat* reached out to Prior to find out more. "There have been very few studies on cat-dog relationships in the same home, despite it being a very common area of concern for pet owners," Prior told *NEWStat*. "This is the first study to look at using a pheromone product to help smooth out the relationship."

Prior said that both pheromone products appeared to be effective. The most apparent changes seen were significant decreases in dogs barking at and chasing cats, and cats spending less time hiding or perching in high places. Moreover, Prior said, the length of time that both animals spent relaxed in the same room increased significantly with the dog-specific product: "So unless there's a particular need to help the cat relax, the dog-specific product may be preferable."

For severe cases of cat-dog aggression, Prior always recommends contacting an animal behaviorist. However, "for those oh-so-common milder cases of cats and dogs who just don't love sharing their home, it definitely seems worthwhile to try using [some kind of pheromone product] to aid the cat-dog relationship."

Prior said the next step is to find out whether there's a benefit to using both types of pheromone products simultaneously—and whether one works better than the other—in a larger, placebo-controlled trial. "In the meantime, in addition to making the house as cat friendly as possible—think high shelves/beds, hiding places, multiple resources—there's no harm in trying pheromone diffusers, and it would seem there's a significant benefit." 🐾



# MY PASSION IS SURGERY



## BRITTANI JONES, DVM, DACVS-SA

*Dr. Jones graduated from The Ohio State University, School of Veterinary Medicine in May 2015. She then completed a general medicine and surgery rotating internship at the Animal Medical Center in New York in July 2016. Dr. Jones went on to complete a small animal surgery residency in July 2019 at Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan. She joined VCA Animal Specialty group in September 2019. Dr. Jones became a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons in February 2020.*

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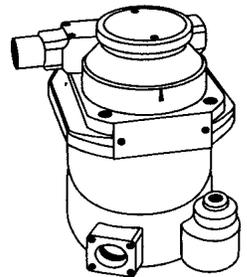
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## Veterinarian gives back

As a young child, Miranda Alexander, DVM 1982, knew that she wanted to become a veterinarian and help animals and the people who care for them.

Alexander first remembers her fascination with animals at the age of two and has had many happy animal-related memories throughout her lifetime.

To pursue her dream of becoming a veterinarian, Alexander studied at the School of Veterinary Medicine. "I was lucky to be accepted to study at the School of Veterinary Medicine. It was known for its reputation and fantastic body of knowledge," she said. "During my sophomore year on my birthday, my younger classmates teased me about



Miranda Alexander, DVM 1982, also helps the community through her volunteer work at the Veterans Stand Down, an annual event providing necessary services to our veterans. Recognizing how important companion animals are to returning veterans, she performs veterinary examinations, vaccines and other services for their pets to help keep them healthy.

turning 30 years old. In good-natured fun, they gave me a tube of Bengay and a bottle of Geritol! I remember laughing and feeling that I was exactly where I was supposed to be and felt privileged to be there."

After graduating, Alexander did a one-year internship and then began practicing veterinary medicine in 1983. Since then she has built long-term relationships with her patients and clients in the San Diego area. She and her colleagues take great pride in personalizing pet care and treating pets as valued family members.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of my career is supporting the human-animal bond," described Alexander.

"Our pets represent a direct connection with nature, and they provide non-judgemental love. They lower our blood pressure and offer us a general feeling of well-being. I have three dogs and two cats myself, and I find happiness just hanging out with them."

Alexander's devotion to animals extends beyond her practice. She co-founded the St. Vincent de Paul Vaccine Program, where she has generously volunteered her time for the past 23 years. "When a small advertisement appeared in a local veterinary newsletter calling for a volunteer veterinarian to help start a new vaccine program for pets of the homeless, I jumped at the chance," recalled Alexander. "I wanted to help. Pets of the homeless provide companionship, love and they even render watchdog protection at night."



Miranda Alexander, at the age of eight, carrying a baby chimpanzee at her birthday party held at a Los Angeles area petting zoo.

Once a month, she gives immunizations free of charge to dogs and cats of the homeless and the economically disadvantaged. Not only are her services free, she also compensates her staff to assist her and brings all the necessary medications and supplies. In 2005, Father Joe Carroll honored Alexander with the Bishop Maher Award for her tireless work in helping the community.

The experiences of her volunteer work and practice have been very meaningful to Alexander. Grateful for the education she received, Alexander has given a planned gift to the school as a way to say thank you.

"My career as a veterinarian has been rewarding and has helped me to be a happy and content person. This happiness flows into the rest of my life. It has really helped me find my place in this world. In looking to the future, I want to make sure that others have the same wonderful opportunity I have been given," Alexander shared.



## *Community Service Opportunity*

### **Veterinary Care for the Homeless Pets of San Diego**

NEWS UPDATE: San Diego's long running "Father Joe's Vets" local program has joined the national organization The Street Dog Coalition.

First, a farewell nod to the longest running volunteer program for free homeless (and low income) pet vaccines in San Diego County. Father Joe's Vets was co-founded 32 years ago by local veterinarians Miranda Alexander and Kevin May, it has been for the most part a self-funded vaccine clinic.

Over 11,500 dogs and cats have been vaccinated, dewormed, and counseled since 1988 in our space at Saint Vincent De Paul Village. Father Joes Vets have welcomed the help of many Vets and Assistants throughout these years. A special shout out goes out to doctors' Juan Pablo Romero and Yoli Kenney who have been volunteering as Father Joe's Vets for the past 10 years!

The future survival of the Father Joe's Vets clinic was of concern because both of our founders were on the road to retirement. Happily, in January 2020 a new "Dog" arrived in town! The Street Dog Coalition (TSDC) is a national nonprofit company formed in 2015 by Colorado veterinarian John Geller. It's an idea born during his "day job" while working emergency shifts where he wished that depressing "economic euthanasia" could have a better outcome. TSDC's mission is to provide free basic veterinary services to the 50,000 to 100,000 estimated homeless pets in America. TDSC now has more than 35 clinics stretching across our nation.

The new San Diego branch of The Street Dog Coalition clinic is held from 12:00 to 2:00 PM on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month in our long-standing location at Saint Vincent DePaul Village / Joan Kroc Center. The address is 1501 Imperial Ave in downtown San Diego. There are plans also in the works for additional regular Street Dog clinics in Ocean Beach and in the East Village too. We would like to invite any interested veterinarians and staff to join us in offering exams, vaccines, parasite control and basic treatments to our area's homeless pets in need.

NOTE: We require masks on and social distancing protocols for all staff and clients. Also, all supplies are provided by The Street Dog Coalition and all volunteers need to provide, is their time and talent.

Thank you,  
Miranda Alexander DVM

More information can be found at:  
[www.TheStreetDogCoalition.org](http://www.TheStreetDogCoalition.org) . Along with a donation button!

On the website above:  
Check out the U-Tube video Interview of John Geller DVM by Karen Becker DVM

San Diego contact for more information about volunteering : [Emma@thestreetdogcoaliton.org](mailto:Emma@thestreetdogcoaliton.org)

## NEWStat: Essential Minds: How Technicians Are Struggling with Mental Health During The Pandemic

Kathleen Dunbar, RVT, VTS  
(Clinical Practice, Canine/Feline)

*Note: Because of the sensitive and personal nature of the subject matter covered here, some technicians interviewed for this story did not want their real names used. Those in the article identified only by their first name are using a pseudonym.*

10.15.2020: Donna feels the waves lapping over her. Her body feels heavy, like she has reached her limit in the water. She sees no shore in sight. She holds on a bit longer. Donna feels like she is drowning. Water fills her mouth. She can't catch her breath.

"Every shift feels like you have enough time to pull your head out of the water and take a breath before going under again," she said. "Treading water and gasping for those breaths is mentally and physically exhausting."

Donna lives in the Greater Toronto Area, and, like many veterinary technicians, she has been working through the COVID-19 pandemic. She says that in her 34 years of being a technician, she has never experienced a more stressful time in her career.

### Pandemic-Induced Stress

Veterinary technicians are navigating pandemic-induced stressors everywhere. Social isolation, financial worries, family job loss, no childcare, and new responsibilities such as homeschooling are just a few of the new at-home burdens.

Work challenges include fewer teammates, varied work hours, the lack of clarity on "essential" designation, increased caseloads, and clients with limited financial resources. And that's on top of euthanasias without owners present, shortages of supplies, and concern about transmitting COVID-19 or getting it themselves.

The early days were especially challenging, says Sheena Davis, LVT, of Abingdon Square Veterinary Clinic in New York City.

"Within the first two weeks, all logic and organization went out the window," she said. "We were all working in survival mode. There were times when all the cages were full of whining, barking dogs. Phone calls and angry owners were all coming down on us. I had a few moments when I felt overwhelmed and needed to step out of a ward of crying dogs to have a moment to cry for myself."

Crying has become commonplace for Jessica. She has been in the profession for four years and works in a general practice hospital. She said she is losing all hope and dreads the prospect of even a puppy appointment.

"It seems every day is worse than the day before," she said. "My coworkers and I cry almost every day on the floor, either from stress, frustration, or exhaustion."

David, who enjoyed his work before the pandemic, says his stress level remains high. He feels overwhelmed. Several times, he has expressed to his employer that maintaining the high-speed pace creates an environment that increases the risk for mistakes and a weak team.

Of the 30 technicians interviewed for this article, almost every one said that family members are expressing concern for their wellbeing.

### COVID-19 As A Traumatic Experience

Most interviewees indicated that they had some mental health difficulties before the pandemic. About half were seeing a professional counselor or receiving medications. Those with well-managed mental health issues started experiencing an exacerbation once the pandemic hit. Those with no mental health issues began developing them. Some, including Dana Martin, RVT, who works on Prince Edward Island, had been on medication at an earlier point in her life. With the onset of the pandemic, she needed to start medication again. Others, such as Liz, a hospital manager from the tri-state area, sought professional counseling within a month of the beginning of the pandemic.

For Erin Wasson, MSW, a veterinary social worker from the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine, this comes as no surprise.

"The pandemic is a global traumatic experience," Wasson said. "In the bigger, broader community, we're seeing people having traumatic reactions to a situation that is traumatic. We're talking about the people who are continuing to work. They're grateful to still be employed but fearful of being employed."

### Problems With Mood, Energy, Sleep, And Concentration

Although veterinary technicians are thankful to be employed, they are having mood, energy, concentration, and sleep problems. Donna says anxiety emerges as she drives into her workplace parking lot.

"I have to give myself a pep talk because I can feel the anxiety setting in," she said. "Sometimes I start to shake. I have to take a few moments in my car to breathe deeply and tell myself that it's OK to go in."

Debbie, who says her mood affects her eating patterns, and vice versa, has become cantankerous.

"I'm snippy, and I have negative responses to most interactions with others," she said. "I interact less with others. My tone is ruder. I lose my patience quicker and more often." Liz says she reached a breaking point.

"I was 'forced' to step back and disconnect," she said. "I was not a positive influence on staff when I was in that state." She said she has begun reconsidering her value as a manager and her ability to manage the team because of her anxiety.

Liz, like many others, said she has little energy for anything when not at work. For Teresa, who feels like she is on "autopilot," putting away groceries or even getting out of bed has become a feat. Sleep deprivation exacerbates this low energy. Many have problems getting to sleep or staying asleep. Heather, who has worked in the profession since 2009, said, "I find myself waking up in the middle of the night to process [work] situations that occurred during the day. Sometimes it seems as if my brain is on overdrive and won't shut down and rest."

Common nightmares among those interviewed involve angry clients, dying animals, constantly ringing phones, clients pounding on doors, and making mistakes at work. Some say that their significant others have woken up to them screaming in the night while sleeping. Teresa has noticed an increase in already-present night terrors.

Wasson says that this is the nervous system's response to the trauma of COVID-19.

Many said they feel like giving up their duties, and would rather have a colleague finish a task when they can't concentrate.

### Loss Of Empathy And Job Passion

Many say that they have less empathy or none at all. They feel disengaged when communicating with clients because of hostility, or because they feel rushed from one case to the next.

Heather says she usually tries to understand situations from an owner's perspective so she can develop insight into their behavior. However, she said, "I have lost some empathy toward owners who have been overly hostile, aggressive, and threatening. I have never seen behavior manifested in the way I have since COVID-19."

David is losing enthusiasm for his job. He says his wife has also noticed a change in his attitude toward work. "She has asked more than once if there is anything she can do to help me 'love what I do' again. She knows my career is my passion."

Debbie experiences depression daily and is having motivation problems. "I don't care if I work as hard or get as much

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*"There is a potential for the pandemic to have some lasting effects on workplace dynamics, and the feelings that we have about each other as colleagues, particularly if the workplace wasn't so healthy to begin with."*

*- Erin Wasson, MSW*

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"We have protective mechanisms that exist within us to keep us safe," Wasson said. She noted that the ongoing nature of the pandemic keeps people on alert, and they don't know what to expect next.

"Being on alert for a really long time is exhausting," she said. "You've got to have your downtime to rejuvenate and rest and digest, and we're not getting that."

The lack of downtime is also leading to problems concentrating. Many are making mistakes, especially with drug calculations, file omissions, and communication lapses, even with extra checks in place. Jessica said, "I've never been one to make mistakes with medications, but since this started I've made more than I ever have."

Others notice problems with normally straightforward technical skills, such as venipuncture, radiographs, and contact with aggressive patients. Kelly, a seasoned veterinary technician of 14 years, said, "I find myself mildly fearful of pets who are less than enthused about visiting us. I also noticed that my venipuncture skills suffered from my lack of focus, creating further anxiety."

done," she said. "I'm more likely to be a little late to work and less likely to stay late. I'm not doing anything extra or above and beyond."

A third of those interviewed said they are re-evaluating their careers and intend to leave the field once the economy improves.

Wasson says that this is not unexpected. "There is a potential for the pandemic to have some lasting effects on workplace dynamics, and the feelings that we have about each other as colleagues, particularly if the workplace wasn't so healthy to begin with."

Wasson says that it is a natural human response to want things to return to normal. However, she explained that COVID-19 brings an opportunity for those in veterinary medicine to listen and look at things that aren't working and think about letting go of those things. Part of this opportunity involves a lesson in realizing that our mindsets and workplaces can be more flexible than we could have imagined.

— continued on pg 18

## Self-Care Strategies

Self-reflection involves imagining how we can better take care of ourselves, which necessitates putting a focus on daily activities that support general health and wellbeing, and getting help with a professional counselor.

“We need to be gentle with ourselves right now,” Wasson said. “We need to genuinely roll back our expectations of how we think we should be and instead just tend to who we are.”

Robin Ashley, LVMT, technician supervisor at Appalachian Animal Hospital in Piney Flats, Tennessee, admits she is not heeding this advice. She has worked in the profession for close to 20 years and, like many others, was forced to homeschool her children because of the pandemic. She said lack of self-care is “always a looming crack just beneath the surface.”

Her story is not unique. Many veterinary technicians say they just aren’t taking care of themselves.

However, some, such as Heather, use specific self-care strategies. “Recognize we all get stressed,” she says. “Ask for help. Take care of basic needs on a daily basis. Find things to do outside of work that support mental health.”

Physical activity, meal planning, humor, helping others, spending time with their animal companions, and writing down goals are other strategies some veterinary technicians are using. Some are developing an existing or new hobby.

Dallas, who has a hard time keeping her irritability in check, said, “I started getting a bunch of houseplants. Now every day when I get home, I tend to my plants and make sure they’re all happy, which in turn makes me happy to see them thriving.”

Others are focusing on self-reflection, a higher power, yoga, or meditation. Kim Jonah, LVT, a veterinary technician of five years from Nevada, says she listens to music on her drive home from work, reflecting on what went well, what she learned, and how she has grown.

## Positive Impacts

Interestingly, a few veterinary technicians interviewed said that the pandemic has had a silver lining. Jan, who is a firm believer in advocating for herself and others, says that the pandemic has given her a fresh perspective on her future. It pushed her to make changes in her life, and she is grateful for that.

Ashlyne Bigg, RVT, came to terms with her alcoholism during the pandemic. “Close to the end of the lockdown, I realized I had a very serious problem at hand,” she said. “I decided on a hungover Sunday morning that I needed help. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

Bigg said that as a new veterinary technician, the pandemic has forced her to learn quickly and perform under pressure. She says she wouldn’t be as skilled without this experience.

Others say that they feel closer to their colleagues than ever. Daphne, who works at a large specialty and emergency hospital in Philadelphia, says that she has grown to appreciate her coworkers more. She has found new respect for them “doing their very best to keep giving the best standard of care in an environment rife with stress and uncertainty.”

Some set their sights on a feeling of resilience. Kristin, who is studying for her technician specialty exam, said, “I have determined that if I can get through the workload that this pandemic has dropped on us, then I can get through anything. We have had our highest case volume to date, and we are still continuing to provide optimal care.”

Wasson points out that for those who are feeling that they are managing well, they might consider paying it forward.

“If we are someone who’s managing quite well, that’s wonderful,” Wasson said. “Maybe we can take on more for our colleagues who aren’t. Just be present for them and help them in different ways.” Sheena Davis agrees.

“If it is not an emotional burden, help a colleague,” Davis said. “It is easy to get swept up in the madness of this pandemic, but it is also easy to create safe shores to rest on.” 🐾





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# A Fond Farewell

When Valerie Fenstermaker was hired by the CVMA in 1990, little did she know that over 30 years later she would be retiring as its executive director having successfully navigated the association through a myriad of changes. Could she have possibly foreseen the following numbers?

- 8,000** CVMA members
- 30** CVMA boards
- 72** Veterinary Medical Board meetings attended
- 96** CVMA and 52 VISC board meetings attended
- 250+** CVMA committees and task forces
- 2,000+** legislative bills and regulatory packages
- 30** annual conferences plus 72 other CE events
- 120+** publications of the *California Veterinarian*
- 50+** staff members



When she was initially hired as a part-time finance coordinator, if someone had told Val that these numbers would be just part of her vast responsibilities in the coming years, would she have believed it? Fortunately for the California veterinary profession, her approach to leadership and life is to take it head-on. Val became the finance director, then assistant executive director and ultimately the executive director, where she has served for the last 16 years. She didn't just take on the challenges of being the executive director of the largest state veterinary medical association in the nation, she excelled at it. The Gentle Doctor Award, the American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives "Executive of the Year" Award, and the three CVMA President's Awards presented to her over the years are testament to her dedication.

Val has poured her heart and soul into making the CVMA the respected voice, the resource, and the community for veterinarians across the state. She takes pride in having

"served the CVMA members with a passion for the profession that has never wavered." When asked which of her accomplishments makes her the proudest, her response was, "Our many legislative successes that have served to protect and enhance the quality of veterinary medicine and the welfare of animals."

Over the last 24 years, she has, along with the CVMA's Legislative Committee and lobbyists, reviewed and worked on more than a thousand bills affecting the veterinary profession and the well-being of animals in California.

Since becoming the executive director in 2004, Val has worked with the CVMA board to oversee some remarkable changes in the CVMA and the veterinary profession: CVMA membership has steadily climbed from 5,300 members to over 7,800 members; the association's reserves have been built to ensure financial security; the number of legislative issues relating to animals and the profession has increased dramatically; and the CVMA has established itself as

the go-to association for legislators and state agencies. Many new member benefits have also been introduced over the last 16 years.

Thirty years of service to the CVMA have produced moments of joy, struggle, worry, success, and pride for Val. The friendships she has made are dear to her and she will miss her participation in the veterinary profession.



**Dr. Ron Kelp Presenting Valerie Fenstermaker with the President's Award.**



**Dr. Richard Sullivan, Dr. Bill Grant, Valerie Fenstermaker, Dr. Dayna Wiedenkeller, and Dr. George Bishop**



**Dr. Dan Segna, Valerie Fenstermaker, the late Dr. Ron Faoro, and Dr. Ken Pawlowski**

What does the future hold? Well, board meetings at the large conference room table will soon be replaced with time at her kitchen island with her three young granddaughters. Instead of cultivating new member benefits, Val will be tending her garden and cooking Italian food and reading bylaws will be replaced with reading good books. And as for her busy schedule, she can say “farewell” to that...and “hello” to never-ending weekends.

The Board and the staff of the CVMA will miss Val immensely and wish her all the best for a happy, healthy retirement. ■

## Taking the Helm

Finding someone to replace Val as the CVMA’s executive director was no easy task. Although an extensive search was conducted, the perfect candidate was right in plain sight – the CVMA’s legal representative, Dan Baxter.

Dan has worked hand-in-hand with the CVMA for the past twenty years as the association’s legal counsel at the law firm of Wilke Fleury LLP, where he was a partner. He has worked with Val and the CVMA and VISC boards over the years drafting and reviewing contracts, working on legislative initiatives and interpreting legislation, representing the CVMA in litigation, penning articles for *California Veterinarian*, and presenting at both the Pacific Veterinary Conference and in the CVMA’s online seminars. He has also worked extensively with CVMA members through (1) the CVMA Legal Services Program, providing legal advice as needed, and (2) as panel counsel to VISC insureds in proceedings before the Veterinary Medical Board. All of this work has given him an insider’s view and appreciation for the issues faced both by veterinary professionals and the association.

Dan, a Sacramento native, graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and received his law degree from UCLA. He has worked at Wilke Fleury since 1999 where his practice primarily focused on complex business litigation and trial work. In addition to his work with the CVMA, Dan also performed large volumes of work for other professional associations, including the California Optometric Association.

Ready for a change after twenty-one years as a lawyer, Dan is excited to work for the association and the profession with which he has become so familiar. “I am looking forward to working for a singular purpose – one that I am passionate about.”

When asked about what challenges he foresees, he replied, “I think our greatest challenge as an association is making sure we are speaking to all vintages of practitioners. We must honor the past but be flexible and modern enough to keep up with the changes the profession is facing.” Dan is also looking forward to bringing greater attention to the issue of diversity and inclusion in the profession.

In his spare time, Dan is working on mastering his grasp of the Italian language through group study and private lessons. He developed his love for the language on a trip to Europe in 2016 and hopes to make a return trip to Italy soon. He enjoys dabbling in mixology, weekend travels, watching a variety of sports, reading, working out, and spending time with his girlfriend Heather, who also happens to be a lawyer. They have three cats, Pali, Tiki, and Gnocchi, and an exuberant two-year-old yellow lab named Nala.

With his considerable knowledge of the workings of the CVMA, Dan is ready to hit the ground running. We would like to extend him a warm welcome!



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— AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION



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For optimal viewing, please visit the Notices & Recommended Reads section electronically on our SDCVMA website so you can click thru to all the articles and references.

### Veterinary Medical Board Office Open to the Public

The Veterinary Medical Board office is open to the public, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m, excluding state holidays. (916) 515-5220 main • BreEZe Help Desk: (916) 557-1208 for Registration, Password Resets, Account Unlocks & Linking Licenses to your account.



### Extension of DCA Director's Order Waiving Restrictions on Telemedicine and Extending Time to Refill Prescriptions

9.28.2020: Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order [N-39-20](#), on June 4, 2020, the Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) issued the Order Waiving Restrictions on Telemedicine and Extending Time to Refill Prescriptions ([Order](#)), which contains two waivers regarding the veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR), described below. The June 4, 2020 waivers were [extended](#) on July 31, 2020, and extended [again](#) on September 17, 2020, so that the waivers are in effect through December 31, 2020, unless further extended.

*Telemedicine for New or Different Medical Conditions:* As long as the other VCPR [requirements](#) have been met to establish the VCPR, including an initial in-person examination of the animal patient, the Order and related extensions temporarily authorize a veterinarian to use telemedicine to diagnose and treat an animal patient for a new or different medical condition.

*Prescription Refills:* The Order and related extensions temporarily authorizes a prescription issued following an in-person examination last performed between June 1, 2019, and December 31, 2019, to be refilled by the veterinarian, without another in-person examination, for up to 18 months from the date of the last examination and issuance of prescription. For discussion of the intent of these waivers and how these temporary waivers can be used in the practice of veterinary medicine, please see the Updated Guidance document [here](#).



### DCA Director's Order Extending Time to Satisfy Examination Requirements

10.1.2020: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some license applicants have had limited or no access to the examinations needed for licensure. The California Department of Consumer Affairs Director issued a waiver to give more time to veterinarian applicants to take the examinations necessary for licensure, a required step to obtain a license with the Veterinary Medical Board.

Details of this waiver can be found [here](#).



### FDA Reminds Users about the Importance of Following Instructions for the Cold-Therapy Mode of Water-Circulating Hot/Cold Therapy Devices

10.20.2020: FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine is issuing this safety communication to subscribers because water-circulating hot/cold therapy devices are also used in veterinary medicine.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wants patients and health care providers to know about the risk of injury that may happen to patients if the cold-therapy mode of water-circulating hot/cold therapy devices is not used correctly. Patients who use these devices may get injuries from the cold, such as temporary (transient) numbness or discoloration, or frostbite and cell death (necrosis), which may require skin grafts, muscle/skin flap reconstruction, or amputation. The FDA issued this safety communication to help remind health care providers and patients of important instructions for use, warnings, and precautions.

[Read More by visiting the digital Intercom on-line and click here.](#)



### Antimicrobial On-Line Seminar

Online Seminar offered by CVMA: Judicious Use of Medically Important Antimicrobial Drugs (Small Animal Focus)

Speaker: Krystle Reagan, DVM, Ph.D., DACVIM (SAIM)

Date/Time: Wed., November 18, 2020 / 12:30pm - 1:45pm (rsvp deadline November, 9, 2020)

Cost: \$60 DVM Member / \$120 DVM Non-Member

This course satisfies one Hour of California CE Requirement on the judicious use of medically important antimicrobial drugs.

Register: [www.cvma.net](http://www.cvma.net)



## **You can renew your 2021 membership as early as November 15th!**

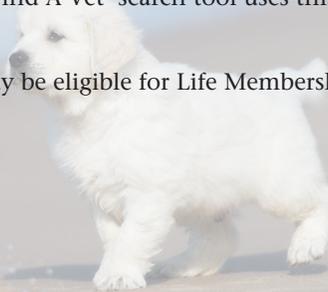
Your SDCVMA membership for the 2021 year will be ready for renewal online beginning 11.15.2020. You can renew by logging into your account at [www.sdcvma.org](http://www.sdcvma.org). If you have lost or forgotten your password, there is a retrieval link located below the Username and Password block. As always, if you need any assistance, please do not hesitate to call the SDCVMA office.

Please renew by January 31st to avoid a late fee.

Don't forget! Take a few minutes to go through your member profile information and update all your current contact information, as well as your practice information. Our 'Find A Vet' search tool uses this information to help potential clients find you, so keep it current!

If you have any questions, need help, or think you may be eligible for Life Membership status, please contact the SDCVMA office for assistance.

Thank you again,  
On behalf of the  
SDCVMA Board of Directors



**\*\*Board Certified Members:** An active membership is required to remain on the Member AVMA Specialty Diplomats recommendation list.

**Did you know that annual Membership Dues for veterinary support staff is only \$35.00? .... And they can attend the Technician Seminar each Spring & Fall at a reduced rate!**



**The 2021 Membership Dues cycle begins mid November. Please consider sponsoring your staff!**

### ***SDCVMA Mission Statement***

*The objective of the SDCVMA is to promote the science and art of veterinary medicine, including its relationship to public health and animal welfare; to nurture a collegial spirit among its members; to advocate for the rights and privileges of veterinarians, particularly those of San Diego and Imperial Counties; and to elevate the standards of the profession.*

### ***SDCVMA Vision Statement***

- *The SDCVMA advocates a standard of excellence for veterinary medicine and public health.*
- *The SDCVMA will champion innovative and sustainable solutions for the veterinary profession and animal welfare.*
- *The SDCVMA will provide services of significant value, advanced education, and mentorship.*
- *The SDCVMA will foster a community spirit amongst its members.*
- *The SDCVMA will provide progressive leadership, with ethical and fiscal responsibility through best management practices.*

## Meetings • Seminars • Events • Webinars

November 6 & 18 VCA EAH & Referral Center Radiology Seminar, Dr. Craychee, MS, DACVR, 1-2pm

**26 Thanksgiving Day**

December 11-14 Fetch DVM 360° Virtual, [www.FetchDVM360.com](http://www.FetchDVM360.com)

February **2021** 18-20 VHMA Management Exchange, San Antonio, TX, [www.vhma.org](http://www.vhma.org)

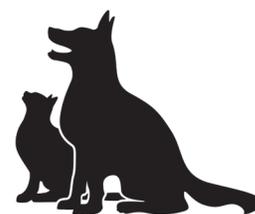
**21 SDCVMA Specialists' Update Virtual Sunday**, 3 CEUs

**TBA SDCVMA Practice Managers' Virtual Meeting**, 3 CEUs

April **24 & 25 SDCVMA Spring Veterinary Conference, Endocrinology for the GP**, 12 CEUs, Handlery Hotel San Diego

**25 SDCVMA Spring Technician Seminar, Endocrinology for the RVT**, 6 CEUs, Handlery Hotel San Diego

June 18-21 CVMA Pacific Veterinary Conference, Long Beach, [www.cvma.net](http://www.cvma.net)



**🐾 LatinAmerica VMA:** Meets last Saturday of each month. For any questions, please contact Dr. Al Guajardo 619-582-2560 or Dr. Miguel Constantino 619-278-0000.

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**Ellie Wattles, DVM, President, Broker**  
**Beka Herrera, Vice President, Broker**  
**Connie Burke, CPA, CVA, CM&AA**

**VENTURA COUNTY:** The town itself is about 20 miles from Ventura or Santa Clarita & just 1-hour drive to LA or Santa Barbara. This unique, authentic, and friendly town is experiencing significant housing development growth, with affordable housing. Small town community with demand for veterinary service. Free-standing facility consists of 1,461 sq. ft with 2 exam rooms. Equipment includes new leased digital X-Ray and IDEXX lab. 2019 Gross ~\$723,000 produced with relief DVMs only, limited services and no weekend hours. Multiple opportunities for growth with owner operator. Motivated Seller. **PRACTICE PRICE: \$365,000. REAL ESTATE PRICE ONLY: \$399,000.**

**INLAND EMPIRE- Rare Opportunity:** Located in the heart of southwest Riverside County and ~1.5 hours from L.A. & San Diego. This upscale community offers a rural feel w/ incredible amenities available. Amazing location to reside and work. PX is located in a popular shopping center w/ ample parking. ~2,800 sq. ft. hospital includes 3 exam rooms, & multiple runs/runs. Well-equipped PX w/ digital X-Ray & IDEXX lab. Under-utilized PX w/ limited DVM hours & services. Room for expansion & growth. 2019 Gross ~\$1.3 Million. **PX PRICE: \$1.1 Million. RE PRICE ONLY: \$400,000.**

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY- New Listing:** Situated in the heart of the Monterey Bay area, 84 miles south of San Francisco, less than 10 miles from the ocean, this friendly community offers an ideal environment for working and living. Although agriculture forms the economic base, technology, electronic companies, electrical products, construction materials and heavy construction companies support the economic structure. Spacious, freestanding ~3,744 square foot leased facility situated near a major thoroughfare. Long established, full-service, small animal hospital includes 3 exam rooms, 30 cages, 8 runs with DR- XRAY & IDEXX lab equipment. 2019 Gross just over \$1.1 Million. **PRACTICE PRICE: \$820,000.**

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, Scotts Valley:** Located about 6 miles north of the City of Santa Cruz & 26 miles southwest of San Jose. Well established PX situated within a strip center. Leasehold facility is ~ 1,800 sq. ft w/ 2 exam rooms & 15+ cages. Full service, computerized 1- DVM px. Equipment includes CR X-Ray & IDEXX lab. 2019 Gross ~\$783,000. Very motivated seller due to health issues. **PRACTICE PRICE ONLY: \$390,000**

**MENDOCINO COUNTY:** Just 2 hours north of the San Francisco Bay Area & west of Sacramento. This area boasts spectacular scenery & distinctive wineries. Hundreds of miles of hiking trails, verdant hills & secluded lakes residents can easily find solitude & beauty. 1 part-time DVM PX. ~1,500 sq ft leasehold facility located in a small strip-center. 2019 Gross ~\$396,000 produced with very limited hours. **PX PRICE ONLY: \$120,000.**

**ORANGE COUNTY, COASTAL- Priced to sell quickly:** This charming community offers ideal weather, a diversified economy & excellent educational system. The city is located near three airports: (SNA), (LGB), & (LAX). PX is located in a newly renovated urban shopping center. Efficient leased facility ~ 1,200 sq. ft. w/ 2 exam rooms, 3 runs & several cages. 2019 Gross ~\$554K produced w/**extremely limited**, part time DVM hours. Significant growth potential with new energetic owner-operator. Currently, the PX values at greater than 1 year's gross. **PX PRICE ONLY: \$470,900.**

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY- New Listing:** Easy access to San Francisco and Sacramento, this convenient, central location, along with a temperate climate. Leased facility, ~2,000 sq. ft located in a shopping center with ample parking. Facility offers 2 exam rooms and 20 cages. Computerized practice includes DR X-RAY, Abaxis lab equipment. Many opportunities for growth with new energetic owner. **PRACTICE PRICE ONLY: \$399,000.**

**GREATER SACRAMENTO- Motivated Seller:** This historic town is located just 30 minutes north of Sacramento within Placer County, paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. Efficient ~1,900 sq. ft. free-standing facility. Computerized practice includes digital X-Ray and IDEXX lab 2019 Gross ~\$798,000. Currently operated as a 1 DVM practice with great staff. Major practice price reduction. **NEW PX PRICE: \$400,000. REAL ESTATE PRICE: \$420,000.**

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY, NORTH:** Near perfect climate. Leisurely drive to beach cities and downtown San Diego. Endless outdoor activities, easy access to retail & commercial areas. ~1,895 sq. ft. leased facility. Full-service hospital w/ experienced staff. 2019 Gross ~\$740,000 produced with limited DVM hours & services. Excellent opportunity for first time buyer or satellite practice. **PRICED FOR A QUICK SALE. PRACTICE PRICE ONLY: \$365,000.**

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California **Veterinary Specialists**

# Please join us in welcoming

## Anastacia Davis, DVM, MS, Practice Limited to Surgery



Dr. Anastacia Davis received her undergraduate degree in Biology at the University of Washington and she is a 2014 graduate of Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

After earning her doctorate in veterinary medicine, she completed a small animal rotating internship in medicine and surgery at Seattle Veterinary Specialists, a surgical internship at Coral Springs Animal Hospital in Florida, and a surgical research fellowship at the University of Georgia. She then completed a three-year residency & master's program in small animal surgery at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. Davis has extensive experience in all aspects of small animal surgery including soft tissue, orthopedics, and neurosurgery. She particularly enjoys oncologic surgery, skin and reconstruction, wound management, and fracture repair.

Dr. Davis joins Christian Osmond, DVM, Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons at our Carlsbad location.

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*Elizabeth Leech, DVM  
DACVECC  
Medical Director*



*Amy Nadolski, DVM  
DACVECC*



*Barrie Sands, DVM*



*Michele Chin, DVM  
Intern/Extern Director*



*Jeanine Persano, DVM*



*Andrew Trempe, DVM*



*Marisa DeAvilla, DVM  
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*Stefan Gordon, BVSc*

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