



Project Brief
Development of Animal Welfare Curriculum
(July 7, 2010)

THE PROJECT

The AVMA will lead a collaborative effort to develop a model curriculum for the study of animal welfare in colleges and schools of veterinary medicine.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

An Animal Welfare Curriculum Planning Group (see “Animal Welfare Curriculum Planning Group and Partners” below) is being convened to further develop the concept, but anticipated components of the project include:

- (1) Identification of essential animal welfare topics to be addressed and time budgets (to incorporate flexibility for discrete courses and integration into existing curricula),
- (2) Module development and/or identification of existing courses/materials that fulfill various components, and
- (3) Examination of methods of delivery (e.g., resident faculty, visiting/adjunct faculty, distance-learning approaches).

The Planning Group’s advisements will be transmitted to the AVMA Executive Board in the form of a recommendation(s) for further action/implementation.

BACKGROUND

Veterinarians are key to protecting animal well being because of the important role they play as intermediaries between animals, their owners and the public. To assume their rightful place as leaders in the field of animal welfare, however, veterinarians must accept the study of animal welfare science and ethics as a legitimate discipline and seek and be provided with the tools they need to actively participate in the wider social discussion about how animals are appropriately used and cared for.

While the discipline of animal welfare is not wholly absent from veterinary curricula, it was made abundantly clear by speakers, panelists and attendees at “Swimming With the Tide” (the 2009 AVMA-AAVMC international symposium on animal welfare in veterinary medical education and research) that instruction in animal welfare science and ethics in colleges of veterinary medicine is currently insufficient, unsystematic, and disconnected in its delivery. The additional challenge of finding room in already crowded curricula to deliver more information only serves to widen an already noticeable gap between aspiration and achievement when it comes to delivery of critical animal welfare knowledge to veterinary students and graduate veterinarians. The need for guidance expressed by those participating in “Swimming With the Tide” has been echoed by individual faculty and deans at multiple colleges of veterinary medicine, as well as by staff within USDA-APHIS who have independently sought assistance in the development of educational modules on animal welfare topics. In addition, during recent meetings of the North American Veterinary Medical Educational Consortium (NAVMEC), animal welfare has consistently been identified as an area for increased focus by participants.

Recognizing this gap, the AVMA Animal Welfare Strategic Goal Team has identified development of a model curriculum as a high priority tactic in fulfillment of the objectives of the AVMA’s strategic goal to be “an advocate for and an authoritative, science-based resource on animal welfare.”

ANIMAL WELFARE CURRICULUM PLANNING GROUP AND PARTNERS

The Animal Welfare Curriculum Planning Group is expected to comprise 6 to 10 subject experts, plus representatives of key stakeholder organizations.

SUBJECT EXPERTS—Subject experts will be identified from nominations solicited from colleges/schools of veterinary medicine, departments of veterinary science, departments of animal science, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and individuals, with attention to proven track records in the delivery of animal welfare-related education and consideration of broad species/practice and discipline representation in the group’s composition. Because animal welfare is a global issue, and because valuable experience is available from other countries where various approaches to curricula are in development or have been implemented, it is anticipated the subject experts identified may include one or two individuals from outside the United States. Colleague and self-nominations are acceptable. Nominations will be reviewed by members of the AVMA Animal Welfare Committee and staff in the AVMA Animal Welfare Division and corresponding recommendations made to the Executive Board Chair for final appointment.

PARTNERS—Key stakeholder organizations to be represented include the AAVMC, USDA, and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation has generously provided a grant to assist in convening the AVMA Animal Welfare Curriculum Planning Group.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

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