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The future is bright for Galaxy Vets

CEO of Galaxy Vets, Ivan Zak, DVM, MBA, shares details of this new healthcare system, its mission to prevent burnout, and more insights on the company's goals.

By Julia Burke, Assistant Editor

Professional development
8 veterinary professionals are recognized by their peers

Year in Review
Top 10 technician articles of 2021

Client education
You'd better watch out! Holiday hazards

Practice management
Earn your team's trust by adopting coaching techniques

Medicine
A brief overview of rehabilitation modalities
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The 2021 Veterinary Heroes™ are as follows:

**Client Service Representative:**
- Susie Martin

**Dermatology:**
- Maria Ierace, DVM

**Emergency Medicine:**
- Charity Uman, MS, DVM

**General Practitioner:**
- CPT Kelly Willard, DVM

**Integrative Medicine:**
- Curtis W. Dewey, DVM, MS, DACVIM (Neurology), DACVS, TCVMP, CCRP

**Internal Medicine:**
- Caeley J. Melmed, DVM, DACVIM (SAIM)

**Surgery:**
- Daniel Stobie, DVM, MS, DACVS

**Technician Medicine:**
- Inger Reres, LVT, VTS (SAIM)

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**dvm360® to honor inaugural Veterinary Heroes™**

**Veterinary professionals nominated and chosen by their peers exemplify leadership and achievement in improving patient outcomes.**

By dvm360® staff

Dvm360®, the top multimedia platform in the veterinary industry, has announced the winners of its inaugural Veterinary Heroes™ recognition program. Inductees will be celebrated in conjunction with Fetch, a dvm360® conference, on December 1, 2021 at the San Diego Convention Center in California.

The Veterinary Heroes™ program honors individuals who have achieved landmark successes within veterinary medicine. Veterinary leaders are nominated by their peers for their remarkable achievements. A panel of distinguished judges from the dvm360® Advisory Board chose one honoree in each category who has made a measurable difference.

“It is an honor to recognize the winners of the first-ever Veterinary Heroes™ awards,” said Mike Hennessy Jr, president and CEO of MJH Life Sciences™, parent company of dvm360®. “This program celebrates the achievements of outstanding veterinary professionals who have worked to push the field forward and make a difference in animal care. We thank our partners for their valued sponsorship of this program.”

Sponsors for the program include Nationwide, Merck, Zoetis, Clevor®, NorthStar VETS, MedVet, and Blue Buffalo.

Adam Christman, DVM, MBA, chief veterinary officer at Fetch, ACVC, and dvm360®, will present winners with their award during the celebratory gala on December 1. Christman is a national speaker on practice management, social media and rehabilitation, and has been in private practice and shelter medicine for 18 years.

“I am truly honored to be a part of an incredibly hardworking essential profession that goes above and beyond the call of duty for animals,” Christman said. “As a fellow veterinarian and master of the ceremony I’m honored to congratulate all of the winners of the first-ever Veterinary Heroes™ award program.”

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The 2021 winners of the Veterinary Heroes™ program are as follows:

**Client service representative**

**Susie Martin; Township Line Animal Hospital, Upper Darby, PA**

Known for treating everyone she encounters with compassion; Susie has almost 25 years of experience in the veterinary field. She works at Township Line Animal Hospital as the hospital manager. She has served as a veterinary assistant, veterinary technician, and supervisor. She tailors her positive approach to each individual person and animal.

“I see so many different types of clients walk through these doors, and the way I communicate with all of them is different depending on their pet, the situation, etc,” Martin said. “The one thing that is consistent is that I show everyone I care.”

Martin knows each patient on a personal level and recommends care based on their individual needs. She also regularly checks in on team members, lending a helping hand and boosting morale.

“Sometimes we all just need to talk it out. This job is demanding—we have long days; some are very happy, and others are heartbreaking. It is my job to be there for my team to comfort them until they have that ‘aha!, lightbulb’ moment where they feel OK again. Most importantly I want people to know they are never alone,” Martin said.

Outside of the clinic, Martin can be found cuddling her 3-lb Yorkshire terrier, Duncan.

**Dermatology**

**Maria Ierace, DVM, DACVD; CountryChase Veterinary Hospital, Tampa, FL**

Maria Ierace, DVM, obtained her veterinary degree from the University of Missouri in 2014. She then completed a 1-year internship in small animal veterinary medicine followed by a 3-year dermatology residency. She achieved diplomate status with the American College of Veterinary Dermatology in 2019.

Ierace offers comfort to each patient and treats them with dedication and focus, aiming to enhance their quality of life, according to her nominator. And she continues to inspire all those around her with the selflessness and motivation she demonstrates.

Ierace enjoys spending her leisure time with her husband, 4 dogs, and horse. Her hobbies include horseback riding, reading, and traveling.

**Emergency medicine**

**Charity J. Uman, MS, DVM; VCA Veterinary Specialists of CT, Hartford, CT**

Charity J. Uman, MS, DVM, is known for her infectious passion for veterinary medicine. Her journey into the veterinary sector began when she was 18 years old and working as a kennel attendant at a local Humane Society.

After receiving an MS from the Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine Center, Center for Animals and Public Safety, she earned her DVM from the Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine. Uman then completed a clinical internship in small animal medicine and surgery at Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts, where she received the Sharon Drellich Memorial Award for demonstrating a high level of professionalism, collegiality, and compassion.

Since 2010, Uman has been a practicing veterinarian, spending the past 6 years at VCA Veterinary Specialists of CT, where she has risen from emergency department doctor to director of the emergency department. Uman’s nominator commended her on her efforts in providing the highest quality of care to both her patients and clients—especially amid the difficult times brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, many clients find solace in her advice and guidance, as she makes them feel connected to their pets’ treatment plans, the nominator said. Deemed an outstanding colleague, Uman is considered a hero at her practice and an integral part of her team.

“I am only as good as the people around me and wouldn’t be where I am without the wonderful people I’ve met along the way and the amazing staff I work with today,” Uman said. "Thank you."

Her favorite aspects of her job are helping a variety of animals such as rehabilitating injured wildlife, and seeing the joy on her client’s faces when the team successfully treats their pet. In her spare time, Uman can be found trail and ultrarunning, and outside listening to the birds.
An OPEN LETTER to VETERINARIANS from

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And we will pay off these words with our actions. This is just the beginning.

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Together for pets. After all, it’s why we’re both here.

Sincerely,
Bethany Quam
Group President at Blue Buffalo Co.
General practitioner

CPT Kelly Willard, DVM; Hudson Veterinary Hospital, Hudson, OH

As the owner of Hudson Veterinary Hospital, CPT Kelly Willard, DVM is known for serving her staff and clients with positivity, thoroughness, and compassion.

Willard is a captain in the US Army Reserve Veterinary Corps, which she joined to help service members and the military working dogs (MWDs). When her Army unit was deployed to Afghanistan, she was eager to make a difference. She treated MWDs, including special operations dogs, and she helped start a blood bank program for them. She currently partners with the nonprofit organization Paws of Honor to provide veterinary care for retired law enforcement dogs and MWDs.

“I have always wanted to become a veterinarian for as long as I can remember,” Willard said. Willard grew up around animals—her father being a police officer in Baltimore, Maryland, in the K-9 unit. She graduated from Ross University and did her clinical year at Virginia Tech.

While studying abroad in Kenya, she learned how important animals are to the survival of humans. She lived side by side with the Maasai tribe and saw how they nurtured the animals that provided them with milk. She said she gained a better understanding of how veterinary care was bigger than just caring for household pets.

“Always remember why you became a veterinarian,” she said. “I believe that if this is truly your passion, others will be able to see that, and you will succeed.”

Willard lives in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, with her husband, Ryan, and 2 young daughters, Olivia and Averi. She has 2 dogs—Scarlet, an English black lab, and Theo, an American Staffordshire terrier. She also has 2 dwarf hamsters, Gus and Frank, and a gecko, Frankenstein.

Integrative medicine

Curtis W. Dewey, DVM, MS, DACVIM (Neurology), DACVS, TCVMP, CCRP; Elemental Pet Vets, Freeville, NY

Curtis W. Dewey, DVM, MS, DACVIM (Neurology), DACVS, TCVMP, CCRP, is president of Elemental Pet Vets and a champion for integrative medicine. His team at Elemental Pet Vets focuses on rehabilitation, herbal treatments, acupuncture, and other modalities of traditional Chinese veterinary therapy, including acupuncture, herbal therapy, food therapy, and Tui-Na massage therapy.

Dewey comes from a medical family and was always interested in the field. Drawn to animals from early childhood, he said that he felt becoming a veterinarian was the best path to combine those passions.

“What gets me out of bed every morning and keeps me going [is helping] my patients and their families; despite the rigorous of veterinary medicine, helping patients feel better is worth the effort,” Dewey said.

In addition to his clinical work, Dewey is coauthor of Clinician’s Guide to Canine Acupuncture, a comprehensive integrative textbook with numerous colored illustrations and photographs, with Huisheng (Shen) Xie, DVM, PhD, founder and president of Chi University.

Dewey helped develop the formula for CogniCaps because he wanted to create a multi-ingredient supplement that combined conventional western nutraceuticals with Chinese herbals.

“There was nothing like this on the market, so I was prescribing multiple individual supplements for canine cognitive dysfunction for years,” Dewey said, “Fortunately, my good friend and colleague Theresa Fossum made the dream of this integrative supplement a reality through her company, Dr. Fossum’s Pet Care.”

Dewey credits his wife, Janette, for being the “mastermind” behind Elemental Pet Vets and his “dream team” of staff and coworkers, who make everything possible.

Dewey said his reaction to being named a Veterinary Hero was a mixture of surprise and joy.

“This award is particularly meaningful to me…I became involved in integrative medicine fairly late in my veterinary career trajectory, but I put my heart and soul into making a positive impact in this field. To be recognized by my peers as a leader in integrative veterinary medicine is a great honor,” he said.

Internal medicine

Caeley J. Melmed, DVM, DACVIM (SAIM); MedVet, Dallas, TX

Caeley J. Melmed, DVM, DACVIM (SAIM), is the mobile consultations and referral partner liaison for MedVet Dallas, providing mobile...
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consultation and ultrasound services for veterinarians in her region. She both attended veterinary school and completed her residency at Texas A&M University, and served her internship at The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Melmed later worked as an associate internist and helped form the Veterinary Medicine Specialists practice, which merged with MedVet Specialty and Emergency in 2017.

Melmed said she comes from a long family line of doctors and some of her earliest memories involved her tagging along with her father as he tended to after-hours emergencies at the hospital. “When my first (and only) span took 3 hours, it became immediately clear that the surgical abilities in my family lineage stopped with me,” she said. “Thankfully, my other skills …pave the way to becoming an internist.”

According to her award nominator, Melmed is not only a talented veterinary internist and clinician, but also a kind and compassionate care provider. A referral internist, Melmed performs mobile ultrasound evaluations for a community of veterinarians. Her approach to assisting veterinary professionals with diagnosis and treatment plans in their private practices is thoughtful, according to the nominator.

“We tend to think of veterinary medicine as an intellectual and educational pursuit and certainly that is the foundation. But so much of what we do is based on subtle observations and a good sense of instinct,” said Melmed. Melmed lives with her husband and children on a farm with 40 animals. In addition to caring for animals, she enjoys backpacking around the world, including the rainforests of Nicaragua and camping in Jordan. “My mission is to lower the bar during our travels so that we are all, once again, appreciative of [modern conveniences],” she said.
from the University of Missouri, College of Veterinary Medicine. He completed an internship in small-animal medicine and surgery at Angell Memorial Animal Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, completed a 3-year surgical residency at the University of Minnesota, and earned a master’s degree in veterinary surgery, radiology, and anesthesia. Stobie also is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and completed the mini-MBA certificate program at the Rutgers School of Business.

In 2000, Stobie formed Veterinary Surgical and Diagnostic Specialists, a mobile surgical and ultrasound practice that has evolved into NorthStar VETS. He serves as chief of staff for the business.

According to his nominator, Stobie demonstrated “steadfast leadership” throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He implemented safety procedures for clients and staff, demonstrated gratitude for his veterinary team by providing food on busy days, and maintained transparency and communication with employees about ever-changing CDC recommendations through weekly Zoom meetings. Under his leadership, NorthStar VETS continued to see patients 24/7, even as many referring practices remained closed or operated with reduced hours.

Stobie said he was “blown away and humbled” to receive the Veterinary Heroes award, especially during a difficult time for the profession. “I think what meant the most to me was when I realized I was nominated by my staff. They are the ones who should be receiving this award in that they are the real heroes, doing the hard work, day in and day out, during the pandemic, and saving numerous animals and helping the public,” he added.

Stobie said he has always had a love for animals and never wanted to do anything but become a veterinarian. “I find it very rewarding to see a sick or injured pet and restore them back to health. The appreciation and joy on the pet parent’s face makes it all worth it,” he said.

Stobie also participates in veterinary management groups, providing guidance on veterinary economics and practice management. He is involved in development of new and novel surgical techniques including the dome trochleoplasty for patellar luxations in dogs, and he pioneered a new total hip procedure.

Outside his practice, Stobie is a beekeeper and equestrian, who enjoys horseback riding with his daughter. He relaxes by mowing his pastures with his dog, gardening, and going to the beach.

Technician medicine

Inger Reres, LVT, VTS (SAIM);
VCA Veterinary Referral and Emergency Center of Westbury, Ronkonkoma, NY

Inger Reres, LVT, VTS (SAIM), is known for her robust skillset and experience. For almost a decade, Reres has been a ‘go-to’ professional at VCA Veterinary Referral and Emergency Center of Westbury and has availed herself to her team on all levels. She has helped develop programs in hands-free radiology and assisted in training staff members in hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Reres and her husband, Mike, recently welcomed their infant daughter, Cassandra, to the family, and, right up until her due date, she worked fiercely for her veterinary team, with neither a complaint nor sign of slowing down, according to her nominator.

Reres has given continuing education (CE) talks to other technicians in her region about the challenges of neonate care after a cesarean section. As the lead technician on an extremely busy internal medicine service, Reres handles every situation with ease, whether it’s managing numerous questions, laboratory results calls or medication queries, her nominator said. Reres’ ability to deal with multiple tasks at once and her positivity ensures the practice runs seamlessly and efficiently. She is considered a hero to her colleagues, patients, and clients year-round for all her efforts and contributions.

“All of us who are in the field do it because of our passion, and to be recognized for that passion is an incredible validation,” Reres said.

Reres said her favorite aspect of her career is taking part in solving the mysteries many owners have about their pets by sharing her knowledge with them and piecing together the puzzles to help reunite a family.

During her free time, Reres’ hobbies are geared toward the arts, specifically theater. She enjoys costuming period plays and building sets for her high school theater, where her dogs have had cameos on stage.
Phovia™ - The Future of Pyoderma Treatment

Blake Gibson, DVM
Amelia G. White, DVM, MS, DACVD

Pyoderma is defined as skin disease characterized by neutrophilic inflammation and most commonly refers to bacterial skin infection. It is classified according to depth of tissue involvement from (superficial epithelium), to superficial (epidermis and/or hair follicle epithelium), to deep (dermis and/or subcutis).1 While pyoderma may be primary, secondary origin is more common and is a sequela of conditions that impair normal skin defenses (e.g. allergic skin disease, autoimmune disorders, keratinization disorders, immunological dysfunction, trauma).1 Proper treatment necessitates that any contributing cause be identified and concurrently addressed along with instituting antimicrobial therapy. Depending on the severity and extent of infection, antimicrobials may be administered topically and/or systemically.1

As antimicrobial resistance increases, recommended approaches to treatment of infections have evolved to emphasize focused intervention for the organism(s) and inclusion of alternative therapies less likely to contribute to the development of resistance.2-3 Topical antimicrobial therapies are an excellent example with benefits including significantly higher drug concentrations at the target site, reduced expense, and fewer monitoring concerns compared to systemic therapies.2-3 In the case of shampoos and bathing for dermatological conditions, additional benefits include mechanical removal of organisms and debris, and restoration of the skin barrier through hydrotherapy and specialized active ingredients.3 However, topical therapies such as bathing are not without associated disadvantages – primarily, the increased effort and time commitment on behalf of the pet-owner. In human dermatology, treatment duration, complexity, and tolerability have been associated with non-adherence to treatment and resultant therapeutic failure.4 Consequently, development of topical treatment modalities that require less owner effort may improve outcomes for veterinary pyoderma patients. An example of such a recent development is low-energy light therapy.

Low-energy light therapy, or photobiomodulation, is a recent addition to the veterinary clinical repertoire. Using a light-emitting energy source, light therapy devices are applied to target tissues to alter cellular metabolism and molecular pathways in a variety of in-clinic treatment regimens.2 Early applications employed laser light emitters commonly described as “cold laser” or “low-level laser therapy”.5 These laser devices, however, have demonstrated limited efficacy in veterinary dermatology, with recent studies of atopic dermatitis patients, post-surgical wound healing models, and open wound healing models showing no advantage in treated dogs versus control.6, 7, 8 However, a novel low-energy light therapy system employing LED-based light emission combined with a topically-applied fluorescence biomodulation gel substrate (Phovia™; KLOX Technologies Limited, Dublin, Ireland) addresses short-comings of the conventional approach by improving tissue penetration and tailoring energy transmission to the tissue and depth of clinical interest.9 Application of the Phovia™ system in the treatment of canine superficial pyoderma, interdigital pyoderma, otitis externa, and deep pyoderma has demonstrated significant improvement in outcomes as defined by metrics evaluating lesion severity and response with a 50% reduction in time to lesion resolution.10, 11, 12, 13 These results demonstrate the advantage that KLOX’s Phovia™ provides in the treatment of a variety of canine dermatological diseases, especially pyoderma.

Similar benefits are observed in patients treated at our referral dermatology practice. An excellent case example here demonstrates the efficacy of this therapy and convenience it provides pet-owners. This 11-year-old male castrated Labrador retriever presented for severe osteoarthritis and numerous calluses with deep pyoderma. Several rounds of antibiotics failed to improve the infection over the preceding three years, and culture revealed multidrug-resistant Staphylococcus pseudintermedius with very limited antibiotic options. The painful nature of these lesions further complicated the ease of topical therapy application at home. Phovia™ was implemented in the treatment of this case without the use of antibiotic therapy, and within 35 days the lesions were completely resolved and have not returned over three months later. This pain free and easy-to-apply therapy eliminated the need for aggressive at home care and provided a successful outcome without the use of antibiotics despite the presence of a drug-resistant bacteria. As the battle against super infections rages ahead, innovative, safe and effective therapies like Phovia™ will become the future of the therapeutic approach to pyoderma.


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THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR Galaxy Vets

Ivan Zak, DVM, MBA, CEO of Galaxy Vets, shares details of this new health care system, its mission to prevent burnout, and more insights on the company’s goals.

By Julia Burke, Assistant Editor

Employee investment
With about 50 corporate groups active in North America, Zak said “[Galaxy Vets] decided to create an organization that is radically different than anything else.” The company is doing this by allocating equity in the network to its’ employees—veterinarians, specialists, technicians, and administrative personnel—who will also be considered co-owners and shareholders of the organization.

“The thing that differentiates [Galaxy Vets] is the mutual ownership model. Everybody in the organization not only [becomes] the shareholder, which is a financial gain, but also [has] a vote and a voice and [contributes to] the decisions of the company. The mechanism through which we’re providing ownership is called ESOP (employee stock option plan), which, by design, has to have the highest preference of shares that the employees are receiving,” Zak said.

“Some organizations provide some equity or bonuses to veterinarians [and] associates, [but] we’re going [to offer equity] in the entire organization. From management to veterinarians to ER vets who are working in the emergency locums and relief vets…and to customer service representatives and receptionists, so everybody gets shares in the organization,” he said. To facilitate this shared-by-all model, the company developed additional strategies, such as improving

Our goal is to build a vertically integrated organization where people who do the actual work get a piece of the pie and directly benefit from its success.”

— Ivan Zak, DVM, MBA

Ivan Zakharenkov “Zak,” DVM, MBA, the founder of 2 successful veterinary start-ups—Smart Flow and Veterinary Integration Solutions (VIS)—now has a resume that includes his role as the CEO of Galaxy Vets, a new employee-centered veterinary system dedicated to “giving veterinary medicine back to veterinarians” in the United States and eliminating burnout. “Our goal is to build a vertically integrated organization where people who do the actual work get a piece of the pie and directly benefit from its success. Unlike most consolidators, Galaxy Vets is founded, funded and run by vets,” Zak said in an interview with Firstline®.
operations in the acquired practices, developing a unique value creation plan, and expanding the services beyond the brick and mortar.

**Burnout prevention**

A key focus with Galaxy Vets is burnout prevention. When asked what he’s looking forward to most with the company, Zak’s answer was simple: “Happy people.” The inspiration derives from Zak’s personal experiences; struggling with mental health issues while working in emergency veterinary medicine.

“About...15 years ago, while in practice...I went into a pretty deep depression and [experienced] burnout...at that point, it felt like something I was ashamed of. I thought I was weak, that I couldn’t work days and days straight of emergency...but [within the] past 10 [to] 15 years, I realized this is a problem with the entire industry,” Zak said.

“It felt right to try to find a solution. A lot of people are looking for a solution and what to do when you [are] burned out,” he said. “[The veterinary practice] is actually an environment that can cause [burnout], so the prevention of it sits within the management. As I was studying in business school, I decided to focus on that as a thesis for my dissertation and further took it from dissertation to become a project.”

Zak emphasized that burnout demonstrates the end stage...
TECHNICIAN PROFILE

Duck dad
When he is not working as the CEO of Galaxy Vets, Zak is the proud pet parent of several ducks. “This year, we got 7 ducklings with a purpose of teaching [my] kids where the eggs come from. We bought these egg-laying ducks, and as they grew, it turned out that 6 out of 7 are male, so there will be no eggs,” Zak said, “So we ended up staying with the 4 of them.”

“We named 1 [duck]—for some reason my son named him ‘George’—but the others don’t have names. It was the first 1 he grabbed out of a box and named him. [The ducks] have little tags on them, and they chill in the backyard and in the little pond we have,” he said.

of general unhappiness of veterinarians, which is a result of various contributing factors. Galaxy Vets aims to combat this multifaceted issue by addressing the key challenges that veterinary professionals cite as a reason they consider leaving the profession, and eliminating the classic burnout triggers outlined by Christina Maslach, an American social psychologist known for her research on occupational burnout. Some of these factors include insufficient reward, lack of goals beyond graduation, work overload, and the toxic environment of handling dissatisfied clients who must spend excessive amounts of money on their sick pets.

Another cause of burnout he highlighted is “the management issues...which include the diversity and inclusion issues and workplace safety. Management is pushing people beyond the hours they should be working. The motivation through financial gain is not playing a good role in the whole environment. It’s a multangled problem that we’re going to try to attack bit by bit by recognizing these issues. Our goal is zero economic euthanasias,” Zak said.

The future of Galaxy Vets
The short-term goal for Galaxy Vets is to create a model that could be replicated in any geographic area. Because most businesses are expanding geographically from 1 location, the company is building a vertically integrated organization consisting of independent hubs—“solar systems,” as Zak described it.

“We have this space analogy. The entire organization is [a] galaxy; it’s comprised of “solar systems” consisting of a de novo-built specialty and emergency hospital (“Star”) surrounded by 10 general practices (“Planets”) within a small radius. So that’s 1 functional ecosystem in a vertically integrated unit, which we are kicking off right now in North Texas. The hope is to be able to expand that to about 200 [hospitals] across the country before we go to the IPO [initial public offering, when the company’s shares are traded on a stock exchange], but the long-term dream behind this endeavor is [to] create an environment in which people are happy,” Zak said.

“This could be replicated over and over, not only in North America, but in Europe and Australia—at least the English-speaking countries,” Zak said. “That’s a long-term vision and potentially through this system, retain the ownership of the domain within the hands of veterinarians.”

Conclusion
Zak remarked that obstacles exist within the veterinary industry because of a lack of veterinarians and geographical limitations, and he offered some advice on how companies can combat this by maximizing technology. “The pandemic really taught us how to work remotely. This is my fourth company I have built without any office, and we need it to really leverage technology, such as telemedicine,” he said.
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As 2021 ends, the Firstline® editorial staff wanted to look back on the top articles from the year. From how to manage the blocked cat to helping amplify the voice of veterinary technicians, here are our most-clicked veterinary technician stories.

1. **Management of the blocked cat for veterinary technicians**

   In a recap of a Fetch dvm360® Virtual Session this past May, David Liss, MS, MBA, RVT, VTS (EEC, SAIM), CVPM, discussed facts and practical management tips that the entire veterinary team must know when treating blocked cats.

   dvm360.com/view/management-of-the-blocked-cat-for-veterinary-technicians

2. **Tips for veterinary technicians entering the field**

   Liz Hughston, MEd, RVT, CVT, LVT, VTS (SAIM, ECC), shared 3 lessons she wishes she knew when she first started, for future veterinary technicians or technicians entering the field.

   dvm360.com/view/tips-for-veterinary-technicians-entering-the-field

3. **AASVB unveils Standards & Policies for new PAVE for Veterinary Technicians**

   Earlier this year, the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB) announced the completion of the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). The PAVE program assesses the educational equivalency of veterinary technicians who graduated outside the United States and Canada from nonaccredited programs.
**4 Ways to honor your veterinary technicians**

As a beginning to National Veterinary Technician Week, dvm360® compiled a list of 4 different ways veterinary practices can honor their technicians. From gift cards to supplemental paid time off, these creative ways to celebrate your technicians are sure to make them feel appreciated for all their hard work.

**5 Tips for technicians to improve phlebotomy skills**

During her talk at the 2021 Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference®, Karen Roach, RVT, VTS (ECC), explained how veterinary technicians can improve their phlebotomy skills to maximize success. She taught attendees how to deal with difficult veins, proper patient positioning, and maximizing successful blood draws.

**3 must-reads on veterinary technicians**

These 3 articles within 1 highlight veterinary technicians. They explore content such as celebrating veterinary technicians during National Veterinary Technician Week and 1 veterinary technician’s journey and how it led her to educate others.

**More than a career: a level 3 veterinary technician shares her incredible career path journey**

Blue Pearl veterinary technician Laura Champagne, BS, CVT (Veterinary Technology), shared her journey into the veterinary medical field and how it helped inspire her to implement animal science education in technical schools and high schools.

**Animal Medical Center appoints inaugural chief veterinary technician**

The Animal Medical Center in New York, New York, announced this year it appointed Jaclyn Mavros, LVT, as its first chief veterinary technician (CVT). Mavros is one of only a handful of CVTs throughout the country.

**Veterinary technicians embrace their roles**

In honor of National Veterinary Technician Week, dvm360® asked veterinary technicians from all over the country with a wide range of specialties what they love about their jobs, what inspired them to join the field, and more.

**Amplifying the voice of veterinary technicians everywhere**

Serena Pudelski, RVT, broke down why veterinary technicians are more than just in-clinic workers and what opportunities are available for them. Pudelski urged veterinary technicians to challenge all veterinarians and licensing boards to think outside the box regarding the Vet Tech Society Movement.
The holidays bring great joy and precious time spent with loved ones including family, friends, and beloved companion animals. However, this season is also notorious for bringing a surge of calls to the clinic regarding pets harmed by festive items. Here is a list of some of the most common hazards clients should be aware of during the holidays.

Decoration hazards
Although ornate decor around the home makes it appear cozy and cheerful, ensure clients keep these items out of reach because they can be dangerous to pets:
- **Christmas trees and water additives**
- **Appealing decorations**: Items to keep out of pets’ reach include tinsel, ornaments, and potpourris.
- **Candles and electric lights**
- **Festive flowers and plants**: Amaryllis, mistletoe, balsam, pine, cedar, and holly are among plants that can be harmful or poisonous.

Food hazards
The holidays are often associated with a plethora of home-cooked meals, sweets, and treats. Discover the foods of the season that may pose threats to pets:
- **Chocolate and baked goods**: It is a given that chocolate should be off-limits to pets, but it is important clients be more mindful of this because this delicacy is more prevalent around the house during the holidays. Desserts are often too rich for pets, which can cause stomach upset, and they often contain xylitol—an artificial sweetener—that has been found to cause liver failure and even death in dogs.
- **Fat trimmings and bones**: Fat trimmings from meat (cooked or uncooked) can cause pancreatitis. Clients should know that although dogs are known to enjoy bones, they can cause choking or can splinter, causing digestive complications.
- **Yeast dough**: This can cause painful gas and possibly dangerous bloating.
- **Other toxic foods**: For more toxic foods clients may be cooking this season, direct them to the ASPCA’s entire list of foods toxic to pets: www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets

**Takeaways**
You can advise clients of these common holiday hazards by posting signs around the clinic, making printouts, or educating them over the phone or in person. It will make a significant difference that their furry companions stay safe during the most wonderful time of the year.
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EARN YOUR TEAM’S TRUST by adopting coaching techniques

At the 2021 ACVC, Kristina Guldbrand, BS, ACC, CVT, shared the importance of developing coaching skills to empower your team members and build their trust.

By Julia Burke, Assistant Editor

Becoming a coach includes a desirable skill set that can be of service to industry leaders and is obtainable to anyone, according to certified leadership and wellness coach Kristina Guldbrand, BS, ACC, CVT. Adopting coaching skills can help veterinary team members achieve their full potential and simultaneously build their trust.

At the 2021 Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference® (ACVC) in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Guldbrand discussed the ins and outs of trust and coaching and how to fuse these skills into veterinary clinics.

Trust

Guldbrand quoted Charles Feltman, MA, NCOC, by defining trust as “choosing to make something important to you vulnerable to the actions of someone else.” She asked attendees to reflect on how they build someone’s trust—naming this is likely unique to each individual. However, she explained that, universally, “trust is built in small moments,” and if you offer someone an opportunity to earn your trust, they can either recognize it and show up for you or ignore it.

If you want to gain your team’s trust, Guldbrand emphasizes the importance of being mindful of when you are showing up for your team members vs when you are not. To start, she outlined the 7 elements of trust, or the BRAVING acronym, according to Brené Brown, PhD, MSW:

- **Boundaries:** Having your own set of boundaries and expressing them clearly to others and respecting other peoples’ boundaries as well.
- **Reliability:** Consistently showing up for others even when it is inconvenient for you.
- **Accountability:** Taking responsibility for your actions and communicating with others about what you are capable (or incapable) of doing.
- **Vault:** Keeping someone else’s important information to yourself and not gossiping.
- **Integrity:** Practicing—rather than professing—you values.
- **Nonjudgment:** Communicating what you need and allowing others to do the same without judgment.
- **Generosity:** Welcoming others and making them feel comfortable while being kind.

Developing coaching skills to earn trust

According to Guldbrand, coaching is helping others change the way they desire by guiding them in the right direction and, when executed properly, can ultimately result in gaining trust. She added that coaching supports each person in becoming their best self by
developing someone’s trust and a defining characteristic of a coach. Team members can explain their thought processes and be met with curiosity rather than judgment. Gulbrand used the example of shifting the statement from “You should have probably done that” to “Can you tell me why that seemed like the right choice for you at the time?” which allows for the team member to provide clarity without being judged.

Conclusion

Incorporating coaching methods into your leadership style at the veterinary clinic sets up situations for you to earn others’ trust. This skill set improves your relationship with your staff and clients, who can ultimately help promote the business and enhance everyone’s day-to-day at the clinic.

REFERENCES

1. Gulbrand K. Building trust in your team with a coaching leadership style. Presented at: Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference®, October 11-13, 2021, Atlantic City, NJ.

Sounding board

According to Gulbrand, the sounding board is “a very powerful tool.” It involves reflective listening and asking open-ended questions, enabling the team member to elaborate and be specific to get to the bottom of a situation.

Nonjudgment

This is a key aspect of developing someone’s trust and a defining characteristic of a coach. Team members can explain their thought processes and be met with curiosity rather than judgment. Gulbrand used the example of shifting the statement from “You should have probably done that” to “Can you tell me why that seemed like the right choice for you at the time?” which allows for the team member to provide clarity without being judged.

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REFERENCES

1. Gulbrand K. Building trust in your team with a coaching leadership style. Presented at: Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference®, October 11-13, 2021, Atlantic City, NJ.
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF rehabilitation modalities

Kirsten Oliver, VN, DAVN (Surgical), CVT, CCRP, CVPP, VTS (Physical Rehabilitation), outlines modalities of basic therapeutic rehabilitation and shares common conditions that can be treated by rehabilitation.

By Julia Burke, Assistant Editor

Physical rehabilitation involves returning an animal who is postsurgical back to their presurgical state, according to Kirsten Oliver, VN, DAVN (Surgical), CVT, CCRP, CVPP, VTS (Physical Rehabilitation). At the 2021 Atlantic Coast Veterinary Conference®, Oliver provided insight on modalities of basic therapeutic rehabilitation and described conditions that can be treated using rehabilitation.

Oliver explained that whether it’s an athletic dog, working dog, or family pet, manual therapy is most frequently used in rehabilitation, although a plethora of other modalities exist as well.

“Hands are basically some of the biggest modalities we have. We do a lot of hands-on treatment in conjunction with low-level therapeutic laser, underwater treadmill, or aquatic therapy. We have therapeutic ultrasound, which is a little different from your traditional diagnostic ultrasound, which aids in deep soft tissue heating. It’s very good over muscles and tendons,” she said.

Oliver also detailed some more modalities, including neuromuscular electrical stimulation, which helps to reeducate muscle groups; low piezo-electric shock wave, which unlike traditional hydroelectric shock wave does not require sedation to perform treatment; acupuncture; targeted pulsed magnetic field therapy; and a wide range of nutraceuticals, pharmacology, and thermal therapies—both hot and cold.

Working Dog Practitioner Program

Along with treating various conditions, as a rehabilitation practitioner, Oliver incorporates concepts of the Working Dog Practitioner Program. This program offers courses that specialize in treating working and performance dogs who often have higher physical exertion demands, increased risk for injury, and more exposure to hazards.

“Our canine officers... their job description is a lot different from your average companion animal. We have a lot of dogs with various job duties ranging from protection to detection so they have to be at a slightly different athletic conditioning level,” Oliver said.
Common conditions

There’s various conditions that rehabilitation specialists can treat, Oliver said. They can treat both pre- and postsurgical orthopedic patients, those suffering from musculoskeletal injuries, osteoarthritis, and neurologic patients. They can also help companion animals with weight loss.

“We run a very successful weight management program where we can discuss with...our clients the best way to reduce weight safely with the appropriate diet and exercise regime along with a conditioning program where we can start to reintroduce the idea of activity through low-level, low-impact exercise,” she said.

Rehabilitation can also help oncologic patients with their mobility as they undergo various types of chemotherapy and radiation or after amputation.

“There’s an awful lot we can treat: postsurgical, presurgical, weight loss, neurologic conditions—we work a lot with our referring neurologists. Whether it be a postoperative neurology case or a long-term degenerative condition. We can formulate a program to work in the clinic or outside the clinic,” she said.

Takeaways

Manual therapy is a key component to the success of rehabilitation along with a range of modalities currently available to treat pets. Common conditions that can be treated using rehabilitation include orthopedic issues, weight management, oncologic conditions, and beyond.

Like in other areas of veterinary medicine, certain rehabilitation professionals offer at-home services to provide both pets and their owners more comfort and convenience.

REFERENCE

Bringing rehabilitation into clients’ homes

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic has swept through the nation, many clients have not been able to bring their pets in to the clinic for regular treatment. “[Many] people don’t want to or can’t bring their animals in, so we’re happy to work with them to get them the kind of rehab their pet needs at home,” Oliver said.

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