Message from the Editor

The Students of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (SCVMA) consider 2014 a great year, with some exciting new developments coming down the pipes for the CVMA student talks at Canadian veterinary colleges. SCVMA representatives from across Canada have had four general meetings throughout the year to discuss plans and changes to student lunch talks and the SCVMA Symposium.

The SCVMA Symposium was held at FMV in St. Hyacinthe, Québec in January 2014 and veterinary students from across Canada enjoyed a weekend full of wet labs, talks, clinical conferences, and social events hosted by the students of FMV. That’s not the only travelling that Canadian veterinary students have done this year; read on to find out about the adventures and experiences of students from each veterinary college and the things they learned on their travels.

We hope to see you all in Saskatoon at the 2015 SCVMA Symposium, hosted by WCVM in January. Until then, best of luck in your studies!

- Daniele Size & Ashley Lamond, OVC SCVMA Representatives

What Happened at the 2014 SCVMA Symposium?

Stéphanie Goulet and her fantastic organizing committee put together an amazing SCVMA Symposium at FMV in January 2014. Veterinary students from across Canada came together for the weekend and had a great time!
I waited two long years for my external rotation at the Vancouver Aquarium, and it was well worth the anticipation. I was fortunate to be surrounded by dedicated marine biologists, trainers, technicians and veterinarians for one month and although I found it to be a rather steep learning curve, I enjoyed every minute I spent there. I simply wish I could have stayed!

A few standout moments for me was spending a day with the University of British Columbia’s Marine Mammal Research Team at the Port Moody Steller Sea Lion Research Station, tube feeding orphaned seal pups at the Marine Mammal Rescue, and drawing blood from a beluga whale for serum banking and research purposes. As a girl from the prairies, this was nothing I had ever experienced and I owe a debt of gratitude to the Vancouver Aquarium for their dedication to education, research, and conservation. After spending one month closely working with these passionate individuals, I have to say that their level of dedication to the health and well-being of their animals and wildlife is beyond compare. It is my hope to one day be considered for their veterinary internship position so that I may continue to learn about these incredible creatures and contribute to their care.

- Lindsay Parker, WCVM

“I owe a debt of gratitude to the Vancouver Aquarium for their dedication to education, research, and conservation.”

- Lindsay Parker, student veterinarian
Vet Grad’s Fourth-year Travels Open a World of Learning

From Tanzania to Yellowknife, Evan Lowe witnesses extremes in how animals and humans interact

Studying parasites and looking at ways to improve animal and human health in Ngorongoro, Tanzania, is a long way from the farm in Beaverlodge, Alberta where Evan Lowe grew up. Since he was a boy, Lowe always had an interest in farm animals and wanted to become a veterinarian; but after working a summer at the University of Alberta’s Swine Research Technology Centre, he was 100 per cent convinced it was the career for him.

In his four years at the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Veterinary medicine, he has had rich learning experiences inside and out of the classroom.

“In my fourth year I have quite literally travelled all over the place. I’ve seen a lot of things that I never thought I would – it’s been fantastic. I’ve lived in 13 different places in 10 months and that doesn’t even include Tanzania,” says Lowe.

“I spent six weeks in Ngorongoro, Tanzania running workshops on disease treatment and prevention with the Maasai; I did pregnancy checking on bison in Peace River in -30 degree weather; I worked on expensive small animal cases in Calgary; I conducted caribou herd health evaluations in Yellowknife; and I’ve worked on calvings, C-sections, vaccine appointments and itchy ears in between.”

Lowe, who graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine on May 8, 2014, travelled extensively during the fourth year of his studies, a year when students are pursuing their practicum training in the Distributed Veterinary Learning Community. His travels and diverse experiences opened a window to a world of learning about how animals in different social contexts are perceived and treated differently.

“Every place brings its different strengths to the table and I have been able to witness the extreme variability in how animals and humans interact and the different types of value that we place on these relationships,” he says.

“After graduation, Evan Lowe will work at the Newell Veterinary Clinic in Brooks, a mixed animal and cow/calf practice. Photo by Riley Brandt, University of Calgary

He says that in Calgary, for example, owners are willing to take a dog hit by a car to an emergency clinic and pay thousands of dollars to help the injured pet. On the other hand, up North he says owners feel that it would be inhumane to treat such a severely injured animal and can’t even imagine spending that amount of money on a pet.

And in Tanzania, there’s a very close connection to human and animal health. For the Maasai, if a calf dies, it is entirely realistic that a child in the family could also die because that animal is an essential source for income and for food.

“It’s amazing how differently people can view animals and the role that they play in our lives.”

“The rotations have allowed me to put into practice everything that we have learned in school, but more importantly they have exposed me to an enormous variety of practices, veterinarians, producers, animals, and viewpoints on the role of veterinarians,” adds Lowe.

Alistair Cribb, Dean at the University of Calgary – Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, says in the fourth year of the veterinary medicine program, students are exposed to a range of clinical case material, with an emphasis on health management and primary care.

In his practicum year of studies at the University of Calgary – Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Evan Lowe lived in 14 different places around the world, gaining a global perspective on animal care. Photo credit: Riley Brandt, University of Calgary
New UCVM graduate, Evan Lowe, spent six weeks during his final year of studies working in Ngorongoro, Tanzania, running workshops on disease treatment and prevention with the Maasai. Photo credit: Evan Lowe

“Our program has been designed to provide students with an excellent foundation in general veterinary practice, while still allowing them to create their own unique program and be exposed to the many career opportunities available in veterinary medicine.”

For Lowe, he’ll take all these incredible experiences with him as he starts his career in Brooks, about two hours southeast of Calgary. He’s been hired by the Newell Veterinary Clinic, which is a mixed animal and cow/calf practice. But before he settles into his job, he is heading to Thailand and Vietnam to relax and travel.

The Chinook Project Helps Keep Labrador Pets and Communities Healthy

As part of their fourth-year rotations, eight Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC) students accompanied two teams of licensed veterinarians in Labrador again this summer, providing free veterinary services for domestic animals. The students worked with six veterinarians from Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and British Columbia.

Approximately 300 animals were cared for in Nain (June 23-25), Sheshatshiu (June 27-30) and Rigolet (July 1-4). The two teams saw about 120 animals for spays, neuters and other minor surgeries, and approximately another 180 animals for vaccines, examinations, medical problems and deworming.

The Chinook Project is a veterinary outreach program based out of the AVC and made possible by the support of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Natural Resources as well as by the band and town councils in the communities involved. The initiative is taking a unique and positive approach to offsetting the lack of veterinary services in some remote areas of Labrador. This is the ninth year for the Chinook Project, and the fifth that it has provided veterinary services in Labrador. All the veterinarians volunteer their time to participate.

The free clinics have been offered in remote areas of Canada since 2006. From 2010-2013, the clinics provided spaying and neutering, vaccination, deworming and general check-ups to 627 dogs and 27 cats in the communities of Nain, Natuashish, Makkovik, Hopedale and Postville while also addressing medical concerns. With the cyclic appearance of rabies in Labrador, vaccinations and dog population control are important means of reducing the risks of domestic animal and human exposure.

For more information about the Chinook Project and to learn about student experiences, visit

http://chinookproject.ca/2014/06/26/chinook-project-2014/

We also invite you to listen to this interview, aired on CBC Labrador Morning Show about the Chinook Project:

www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Newfoundland/ID/2470160782/

Sources:

Department of Natural Resources, Newfoundland and Labrador

Atlantic Veterinary College,
University of Prince Edward Island

- Bruno Ouimet, AVC
Externship Advice from a Third-Year Extern

Each summer, students between their third and fourth years of the DVM program at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) venture into the world of veterinary practice to complete an eight-week externship at a mixed practice. This year, the OVC debuted the Externship Project, wherein five students were selected to blog regularly about their experiences throughout their externships. One student, Jodi Boyd, used her last blog post to impart advice to other students facing their externships in years to come. Her advice is practical and would be applicable to students gaining practical experience at any stage of their career.

“That’s it, that’s all”

Jodi Boyd – July 18, 2014

It’s hard to believe that eight weeks has come and gone! It feels like yesterday I was starting my externship at Dr. Wright Veterinary Services. I guess the cliché is true: “time flies when you’re having fun.” I have had such a wonderful experience with Dr. Bob and his team! I have also been fortunate enough to share my experiences with all of you through my blogs. It’s been a pleasure getting the opportunity to put some of the adventures I’ve had into words and to practice converting veterinary speak to everyday talk (I hope, at least). I’m thankful for you taking the time to read along with me and truly hope you were entertained, educated, or amused along the way.

To close, I wanted to share some advice for future externship students to help enhance their experiences and make them great like mine. I have EIGHT steps to a grEIGHT time (haha – get it?)

1. **Ask questions.**
   Millions of them if you’ve got that many! By the time you hit your externship, the formal classroom learning at OVC is over. Start questioning things and learning from the practical experiences that are offered. Set yourself up for the process of continued education (it’s a lifelong learning from here on out).

2. **Get as much hands-on experience as possible.**
   Not just surgery either! Although everyone gets excited about honing in on their surgical skills, there are tons of hands-on experiences beyond surgery that may not seem as exciting (but are well worth it!). Perfect the everyday skills like nail trims, anal gland expression, and blood draws. Train your hands how to do a good, thorough physical examination. Dive into other areas of clinical practice like inventory, ordering, and finances.

3. **Take on a clinic project.**
   Involve yourself with something bigger that gives back to the practice. Perhaps they provide client education through a bulletin board you can design or a newsletter you can write. Maybe they want to compare the efficacy of two drugs but haven’t had someone to organize the in-clinic data collection. The ideas for summer projects are endless. Take the initiative to make suggestions and gauge the interest of the clinic.

4. **Challenge yourself to move outside your comfort zone.**
   Eventually you’re going to be pushed outside of your comfort zone so you might as well leap willingly yourself in a safe, supportive environment. Try something new. Deal with a situation you’ve never dealt with before. Don’t always choose the easy route of the OVC way of doing something.

5. **Give your opinion (respectfully).**
   Talk about the benefits, risks, and reasons for doing something in a particular way. Research alternatives. Debate topics with the veterinarian you’re working with. It’s a fantastic way to learn!

6. **Practice your Art of Veterinary Medicine skills.**
   Talk to clients. Listen to clients. Take the Calgary-Cambridge Guide goals from simulated client scenarios to real clients! Watch how others communicate. Practice explaining common things to clients, like heartworm transmission, disease, and prevention.

7. **Be part of the team.**
   Spend time in every role within the clinic from the front desk to the infamous “back”. It will give you a much better picture of the client experience and greater appreciation of the support team you’ll have as a veterinarian after graduation. Learn from everyone. The tricks of the trade come from every member of the clinic, not just the veterinarian. Enjoy the people you work with. It will make coming to work every day a pleasant experience you look forward to!

8. **Write about it.**
   Whether or not it’s through the externship blog project, take the time to reflect on your experiences. Blog, keep a journal, update friends through emails, or maybe even write a novel? Whatever works for you. It’s well worth it. You only get to be a 3.5 year veterinary student once (hopefully), so make it an ever-lasting memory!
Students started arriving Wednesday night and, upon their arrival, they met their student hosts that they would be living with over the course of the next several days. Afterwards, they participated in a social evening at the student café along with students from the FMV.

On Thursday, students took part in various sightseeing activities, including visiting captive animal facilities (Biodôme, Granby Zoo, Québec Aquarium and Chouette à Voir). Some decided instead to get some physical activity and skied at Bromont or went skating or tobogganing on Mount Royal. The day ended with a karaoke evening where we discovered many musical talents (or lack thereof)!

On Friday, students attended lectures in the morning and wet labs in the afternoon. Many different topics were covered including companion animal medicine as well as more unusual topics on birds of prey, reptiles and beluga whales living in the St. Lawrence River. In the evening, students were able to taste maple products and danced to Québec music during an evening at the “sugar shack.”

On Saturday, lectures and clinical conferences were held in the morning and afternoon. The Symposium ended on a great note with a closing banquet and a keynote speaker, Dr. Sébastien Kfoury. Students then danced the night away. Our colleagues from across Canada enjoyed all these activities and they will not soon forget our festive spirit!

We would like to express our gratitude to the volunteers and professors who contributed their valuable time as well as members of the organizing committee for their outstanding work. We would also like to thank our generous sponsors.

On behalf of the entire organizing committee, we hope that you had as much fun as we did and that the Symposium met all of your expectations! See you at the 2015 SCVMA Symposium in Saskatoon, SK, from January 8-10!

- Stéphanie Goulet, FMV

The SCVMA Symposium at FMV

Last January 9, 10, and 11, the Students of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (SCVMA) “Legen-Dairy” Symposium took place at the Faculté de Médecine Vétérinaire in St. Hyacinthe. More than 385 students from five Canadian veterinary colleges participated in this event that, as its name suggests, we will remember for a long time!

Stéphanie Goulet releasing a snowy owl into the wild at “Chouette à Voir”