My introduction to the SCVMA Student Executive was in January 2007 when the SCVMA Symposium was held at the AVC in Charlottetown, PEI. We had a great time hosting the vet students who attended Symposium, and much enthusiasm for the SCVMA was generated. Over the past year, I have enjoyed interacting with students and veterinarians from across the country, and have appreciated my time as SCVMA President.

The student executive is made up of 1 student from each of the 4 veterinary colleges. Meetings occur twice a year, once in January at the annual Symposium, and once in July during the CVMA Annual Convention. These meetings are a great way to exchange thoughts and come up with new ideas and initiatives for the SCVMA. I want to thank all of the student executives for the contributions they have made in helping to make SCVMA the best it has ever been.

Part of my duties as President involved attending 4 CVMA Council meetings over my 1-year term. These meetings have been very informative and interesting, and have given me a great appreciation of the roles and duties of the CVMA. I want to thank all of the members of the CVMA Council, as well as the staff at the CVMA, for making this year very enjoyable. Your friendliness as well as your eagerness to listen to the opinions of students is greatly appreciated. Thank you to Janice Lemieux, our SCVMVA staff liaison, for her organizational support and help with paperwork. I would especially like to thank our Executive Director, Mr. Jost am Rhyn, for his hospitality, amazing ability to know everyone in the room, and for taking

Continued as “SCVMA President” on page 2
the time to introduce me to so many people. Working with the CVMA has given me many great opportunities to meet wonderful people and make lifelong connections.

In September, as always, the Blue/White coat ceremonies were held at each veterinary college for the incoming veterinary students. At these ceremonies, the CVMA presents 1st year students with an embroidered lab coat. Later in the semester, the “One Voice” lecture is given to introduce students to the activities of the CVMA. Traditionally, this lecture has very high attendance. These events are always a welcoming way to show new students how the CVMA can help them. We are all so grateful to the CVMA for providing their support to students.

Once again this year we were given the opportunity to select a professor from each college for the annual CVMA Teacher of the Year. The candidates for this award are chosen by second-year students. Congratulations to each of the winners!

Another initiative involving all the students of the SCVMA is the annual National Summer Job File. Posted on the CVMA Web site, this tool helps students to find both summer and permanent employment at veterinary clinics across the country. This is a great help for students looking to obtain working experience in the veterinary field and searching for employment after graduation.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend students for their involvement with the SCVMA, and highlight a few of the activities that have occurred since I became president. First, thank you so much to Scarlett Magda and all the OVC students for hosting the SCVMA Symposium this year. The whole program was very well organized, and the caliber of wet labs and lectures was amazing. We definitely look forward to the Symposium at FMV next year, where Yasmine Raphaël is already busy organizing material. You’ve got your work cut out for you Yasmine in trying to meet the high standards OVC has set, but I’m sure FMV will rise to the occasion. I look forward to seeing you next year!

The annual graduate survey was also undertaken to give senior students a better idea of what to expect after graduation. Thank you very much to Nancy Paquin at FMV for her work on the graduate student survey. This survey really helps bridge the gap between school and the workforce.

A lot has happened this year, and a lot more is coming. In the past year, veterinary students from all 4 colleges have begun a few new initiatives. Various lectures have been held at the different veterinary colleges to gauge student interest in participating in the Canadian Veterinary Reserve. There is an overwhelming response that students do want to participate, and many students have excellent ideas on the roles that students can play in the Reserve. It will be very interesting to see how students’ roles will develop over in the CVR over the next year.

Also, in the spring of 2008, students at each of the veterinary colleges became involved in helping to plan activities for World Rabies Day, which occurred September 28, 2008. In coordination with representatives from the Alliance for Rabies Control, this activity helps to spread awareness of this devastating disease and how the public can help to control it.

Of course, we can’t forget to thank Tamara Quaschnick at WCVM for publishing VetRap. This publication would not have been possible without all of her hard work! Thanks so much Tamara.

Good luck to Holly Spring at OVC, our incoming SCVMA President. I hope you enjoy your term as President as much as I did!

“I also want to take this opportunity to commend students for their involvement with the SCVMA”
LAURINA FREDRICK
WCVSA President
WCVM, Class of 2009

Just want to send a ‘holla’ out to all the veterinary students across Canada. As the president of the Western Canadian Veterinary Students’ Association, I wanted to address some of the important issues faced by students of the veterinary profession. As we are all aware, we students face many different pressures and stressors and it would be impossible to summarize these in a simple 300-word article.

This being said, I have decided to take advantage of the medium seldom used by the right-minded: music. Music you say? Yes, the artistic form of auditory communication incorporating instrumental tones in a structured and continuous manner.

"Relax Yo!"
We’re comin’ onto finals
I know it ain’t fair
The stressometer is rising
I think you’re aware
Type A, Type A+
Heck! Type A2
We’re all psycho overachievers
Tests make us scared
But if you want to succeed
Here’s the thing to do
Relax Relax Relax
Or you’ll get the flu

Go for a walk
Go watch some birds
Do something you love
Even if it’s absurd

For those of you
Who hate your liver
Go out Friday night
Safety first - don’t get a sliver

I know it’s hard
When everyone’s so smart
Some days you want to quit
You wish you took art

But just remember
That time flies fast
Enjoy the ride
Try to have a blast!!!!

Wow! That was amazing. Now that you have been totally inspired, go out there, work hard, play hard, and find a way to have fun every single day, even if you are in the middle of a hellish inferno of exams. Your life will thank you!

JEAN DAVID PERRAULT
President of the Student Association
FMV

At the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Montreal, social life and amusement are at the top of student’s priorities (alongside studies of course). Every year, students organize a party event, starting their first year and continuing until their fourth. Situated in St. Hyacinthe, the students have proven to be quite creative in making this small campus fun and liveable during the school year.

First year students are welcomed by the faculty during their week-long initiation, which is organized by third year students. Future veterinarians demonstrate their special abilities at the “Gong Show” which features sketches, animation, and music.

At the return of Christmas break, the second-year students welcome everyone back to St. Hyacinthe with a Winter Carnival. Every year has a different theme, but fun is always guaranteed, time-after-time. This class also organ-
This has been an exciting year full of anticipation and hard work for the Class of 2008. After our summer externships, we arrived in September for our first rotations at OVC and started the process of preparing for the NAVLE. Two of our classmates came into the 2008 school year with newborns, and how they juggled being mothers and being on clinics is a real inspiration. While it has been great to be out of the classroom and to be placed into the clinics, this has brought long days and nights doing treatments, chasing clinicians, and completing endless paperwork. Now into the final 4 weeks of rotations, we can look back at some of the accomplishments of the year and look ahead to the future.

The NAVLE period in November/December created much anxiety for the class, but there was also a great deal of relief when we were past that landmark exam. Results came in late January, and our class enjoyed a > 95% pass rate.

Five of our equine stream classmates found out they were matched for internships at this time.

January and February were conference months with the North American Veterinary Conference, Ontario Veterinary Medical Association Conference, and the Western Veterinary Conference hosting many 4th year students from OVC. Orlando, Toronto, and Las Vegas offered plenty of entertainment as well as first class continuing education and a chance to get out of the winter weather in Guelph.

March brought more excitement as another 18 people were matched for small animal internships (including 5 at OVC, 2 at AVC, and 1 at WCVM). This is, historically, the time that job offers and contracts become the talk of the student room. As we found out, there are jobs available from coast-to-coast and sorting through the options became the challenge for many people.

The OVC Industry Day brought over 35 industry representatives to school to educate us and entice us to use their products.

Currently, we are hard at work on the annual 4th Year Play where we have a little fun making light of people and the experiences we have had over our 4 years at the OVC. These people then get a chance to have revenge on us at the Kick Off Pub.

The remaining days of rotations are being counted down with anticipation and excitement. A class graduation party and trip to the Dominican Republic in April will be the last time we are all together until convocation on June 12th. By that time, jobs will have started, houses bought, and major life changes will be well under way.

Good luck to all the other graduates and students at WCVM, FMV, and AVC!
The Black Mambas, OVC Class of 2011

Charlotte MacFarlane
Class President
OVC, Class of 2011

The 2007-08 year was definitely an exciting one for the Black Mambas. As OVC’s incoming class, we were introduced to the famous Yamashiro, struck by the awesome Petrik, and did deadly battle on the curling rink with Dr. O’Grady. We got up-close and personal with new animals, live or dissected, some of us more closely than others... (cows kick forward; milk and formalin anyone?)

Our lives changed. We didn’t call home as often (so sometimes home called here). Family and Friends Day was an opportunity for the people we’d left behind to come to the OVC and see where we had disappeared to. The day was enjoyed by parents, friends, and students alike, thanks to the hardworking efforts of the organizing committee.

We organized OVCs first annual Valentine’s Day Bachelor Auction, hosted by the heart-man himself, O’Grady. For the highest bidder, or group of bidders, the lucky ladies would spend an evening with their bachelor and have a hearty home cooked meal. The auction was an instant hit as the boys strutted their stuff for the audience. Who knew our guys were worth so much, or that they could cook so well!

For College Royal, the University’s open house, the first years put on an anatomy display showcasing what they learned this year. Kids loved looking at skulls and skeletons, as well as pin-the-organ-on-the-dog. For the braver souls, the wet specimens were “so gross, they’re cool.” We also entered a team for the College’s Super Thursday, and although we didn’t win, we certainly got super messy, which is a win in itself.

Our Class Hockey team has defined itself this year as more than worthy opponents. In OVC’s Challenge Cup we started off with an inspiring final-seconds win against the 2010 Crimson Crocs, band a decisive win against the 2009 Jade Jags. After a disappointing, and close loss, against the Scalpel Blades, we were able to secure our spot in the finals with a win against the Grey Beards.

To end off the year, and to forget about those nasty exams, the Black Mambas are planning Spring Fling. “A Night with the Stars... Destination Hollywood” should be a party to remember as we transform the campus bar into a mixing ground of Oscars, celebrities, and movie characters.

It was great to meet all of you at OVC this year, and we hope to see you all at FMV in January! Take care, and have a great year. ☻

Scvma gets a new logo

The SCMVA is proud to unveil its new logo. Petra Kos, a student entering her fourth year at OVC, came up with the design concept. Petra looks forward to practicing small animal and equine medicine upon graduating. Her other interests include outdoor pursuits, travel, photography, music, and (luckily for the SCVMA) graphic design!
Each year, the CVMA recognizes one professor from each of the colleges for excellence in teaching. The SCVMA would like to congratulate the recipients and thank them for their dedication to, and provision of a top-notch education.

**Dr. Peter Foley as Voted by AVC, Class of 2009**

Dr. Peter Foley was selected by the AVC Class of 2009 for the CVMA Teacher of the Year Award. Dr. Foley teaches students in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year classes as well as in clinics during 4th year rotations. He is always smiling, and is able to explain concepts so that they are not only understood, but also remembered. He has enthusiasm for every class he teaches, and does amazing imitations of animals in all types of medical situations. He is great at pointing out the relevant material, and making sure students are prepared for future endeavors. Dr. Foley runs the Cat Action Team (CAT) feral cat spay/neuter clinic on Saturdays at AVC where he is always ready with a smile to patiently show any student the proper and most efficient way to do a technique. These days are very much appreciated as students from all years can participate, and get some hands-on experience. Dr. Foley, along with his bagpipes, is also always an active participant at AVC’s annual student-run variety show, Suture Review. Dr. Foley is a DACVIM, and specializes in nephrology, but teaches a wide variety of companion animal internal medicine subjects.

**Dr. Brad Hanna as Voted by OVC, Class of 2009**

In November 2007, Dr. Brad Hanna was chosen as the CVMA Teacher of the Year by the class of OVC 2009 for his ability to inspire students the most toward the subject matter which, in this case, was pharmacology. At OVC, Dr. Hanna teaches in each of the 4 phases of the DVM program but most of his time is spent in phase 2. Dr. Hanna has a natural ability to teach. He tries to imagine what it would be like to be a student in his own classes, and as such, he always knows when to throw in a funny joke, tell a story, or apply the material to an interesting case. Dr. Hanna’s classes are engaging, since he tries to interact with the class as much as possible. His teaching goals include: challenging the students without overwhelming them, creating a foundation on which the students can build, emphasizing logical, critical thinking rather than blind acceptance of anything, and instilling a desire to learn in the students. Our class is very grateful to be taught by such a gifted teacher and wish Dr. Hanna continued success in his career.

**Dr. Lussier as Voted by FMV, Class of 2010**

Merci de nous avoir inspirés par votre approche, vos méthodes d’enseignements et par l’enthousiasme que vous démontrerez dans votre enseignement. Promotion 2010 FMV.

Dr. Lussier est un professeur agrégé à la faculté de médecine vétérinaire ainsi que Conseiller scientifique en médecine et chirurgie des animaux de compagnie. Il a obtenu son D.M.V à la faculté en 1986 et a par la suite fait une maîtrise en science cliniques à l’Université de Montréal. En 1994 il a terminé sa résidence en chirurgie des petits animaux à l’Université Cornell et finalement en 1997 il est devenu diplômé de l’American College of Veterinary Surgeons. Depuis juin 1998, il est professeur adjoint à la Faculté de médecine vétérinaire. Son enseignement est apprécié par tous!!!
CVMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Each year, the CVMA recognizes one professor from each of the colleges for excellence in teaching. The SCVMA would like to congratulate the recipients and thank them for their dedication to providing us with a top-notch education.

Dr. Elemir Simko as Voted by WCVM, Class of 2009

Dr. Elemir Simko, a board-certified Anatomic Pathologist, was recognized for his commitment to education and passion for teaching by being selected as the CVMA Teacher of the Year by the Class of 2009.

Dr. Simko, a professor in general and systemic pathology, teaches in a way that he would like to be taught — a bit of humor, a bit of pressure, and a bit of everything else. His greatest reward is seeing that light go on in the eyes of students — that “Ah, now I understand” look. He enjoys seeing students progress, and finds great satisfaction in knowing that he played a role in that progress.

Dr. Simko encouraged us to learn for life, to make the most of opportunities available to us as students, and to be thankful for the country that we are receiving our education in. Outside the classroom and pathology lab, Dr. Simko enjoys traveling with his wife and five children.

Thank you Dr. Simko for your outstanding efforts!

CLUB ACTIVITIES

WCVM’s Equine Health Education Day

Kim Jones
Equine Club Public Relations Officer
WCVM Class of 2009

The Equine Club at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine held its 6th annual Equine Health Education Day on February 2nd, 2008. Pony Club and 4-H members from Saskatchewan were invited to participate. There were approximately 300 people in attendance. WCVM students volunteered their time to give presentations on various aspects of equine health and to help with the other logistics of running this event smoothly.

Some of this year’s topics included: interactive anatomy, understanding colic, equine dentistry, and performance horse injuries and management. The members were assigned to 1 of 3 groups (beginner, intermediate, or advanced) based on age and knowledge level.

The Equine Health Education Day consisted of 5 different fifty-minute presentations for each group and a lunch break half way through the day. This event is a fantastic opportunity for veterinary students to share the knowledge they have gained regarding equine medicine with young horse enthusiasts, and it is also a major fundraiser for the Equine Club.
2008 Animal Welfare Judging and Assessment Contest

Allison Murray
Pain Club President
WCVM Class of 2009

Hussein Keshwani, Jonathan Leicht, and I (Allison Murray) were able to go to Michigan State University, March 15 and 16, to participate in their 2008 Animal Welfare Judging and Assessment Contest. Our generous sponsors were the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan (FACS) and the American Veterinary Medical Association. We weren’t too sure what we were signing ourselves up for, but we knew it would be an excellent educational experience and opportunity to practice our public speaking skills. Once we arrived, we were happy to see other students from the Atlantic Veterinary College and the Ontario Veterinary College and surprised to learn that 3 Canadian schools made up the Veterinary Division in the American Contest!

Saturday morning was filled with educational seminars covering aquaculture, equine slaughter, sow gestational housing, and companion animal welfare. The real competition began Saturday afternoon with the Team assessment.

Team Task 1:
Create a 2-minute sound byte for a local radio station after a hypothetical activist group had released video footage of an auction barn. Provide an objective assessment of the animal welfare seen in the video.

Team Task 2:
Watch a virtual tour through an auction barn and suggest changes that could be made to improve animal welfare. Our knowledge of Temple Grandin’s cattle handling guidelines really came in handy for this one!

The individual competition began Sunday morning. We had 3 topics — sow gestational housing, aquaculture, and companion dogs. Each topic had 2 scenarios and our job was to judge which scenario had the best animal welfare in mind. The morning went by in a whirlwind of sitting, watching, thinking, writing, and speaking. There was very little time to even consider being nervous!

An awards reception followed the contest and the judges explained the placings as well as their reasons for placement. This was a great part of the contest because we had the chance to recognize our mistakes while the scenarios were still fresh in our minds.

We were delighted to receive the 2nd place overall award in the Team category. Individually we did well also, Hussein Keshwani placed 2nd overall and also was recognized for having the highest marks for questions answered on the spot, Jonathan Leicht placed 4th, and Allison Murray placed 5th.

This contest was a great way to explore the issues and apply the knowledge that we have learned about Animal Welfare. We encourage other veterinary and undergraduate students to consider participating next year.

We thank our generous sponsors: the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan (FACS), and the American Veterinary Medical Association, without whom this experience would not have been possible.

OVC’s Zoo, Exotic, and Wildlife Club

Sarah Rappaport
ZEW Club President
OVC Class 2009

This year the ZEW Club (Zoo, Exotics, and Wildlife) has been very busy running events to increase the exposure of students to veterinary medicine with nontraditional species. Besides hosting lunchtime talks on breeding for zoo animal and parrot behavior (to name a few), this year we’ve added a monthly newsletter, which includes a fact sheet on a different type of exotic animal that may be seen as a pet. For the SCVMA, we helped to organize and run the behind-the-scenes tour to the Toronto Zoo and well as the daring and reptile wet labs. In February, we hosted a panelist dinner with veterinarians from various disciplines, including exotic pet, wildlife, and zoo medicine. Coming up this year we are running our annual tour to the Toronto Zoo for club members, and our second fundraiser for rabbit rescue.
The Wild and Exotic Animal Medicine Society (WEAMS) of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine is a student-run, faculty-supervised volunteer organization that was formed in 1986 when budgetary cuts threatened the loss of the avian and caged pet veterinarian at the WCVM. At that time, students organized and lobbied the administration to preserve the position by lobbying students and faculty, and a flight pen was constructed for the rehabilitation of injured birds of prey. This past fall (2007) new facilities for the treatment of wildlife and exotic pets were opened. Fundraising to construct new flight pen facilities and a new barn are currently under full swing.

WEAMS cares for sick and injured wildlife brought into the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, with the main objectives being rehabilitation and release when possible, or humane euthanasia when necessary. Animals suitable for return to the wild, or donation to educational facilities (such as zoos or falconers) are given excellent surgical and medical care as directed by our team of 3 supervising veterinarians.

Most of the animals brought to WEAMS are birds of prey, many of which are rare or endangered. Over the course of a school year student members put in approximately 2000 volunteer hours caring for these patients, providing rehabilitation, educating the public, and raising the funds required to pay for supplies and maintenance of facilities. Volunteers are responsible for everything from feeding and cage cleaning, to bandaging, medicating, flight training and physiotherapy, and finally releasing.

Public education is a significant component of the society’s mandate, and to achieve this, students participate in booths at various shows and exhibits. Our “Team Education” also visits schools, community groups and libraries with our hand-trained Swainson’s Hawk Jasmine to promote awareness and support for wildlife and environmental conservation.

Over the year students, are also involved in numerous activities and field trips, such as day trips to migration staging areas, tours of various zoos and falconry facilities, wildlife immobilization labs, mini-rounds, guest lectures from visiting experts, and care of nontraditional school herds (musk oxen, llamas, etc). The unique experience and knowledge gained by the students involved in the Society creates more new graduates capable of attending to injured wildlife and exotics, and helps to create an understanding of wildlife issues.

The student chapter of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine was started up in the fall of 2006 by Michael Kim (OVC 2009). Since then, the club has grown to over 80 members! This past year, we have been active in a variety of activities, including the SCVMA symposium at the OVC. At the symposium, we held a lecture on cardioversion in horses, presented by Dr. Kim McGurrin, one of the veterinarians who developed the technology. A small animal cardiology wet lab was led by Dr. Mike O’Grady — one of the top veterinary cardiologists, who showed us how to deal with heart block and sick sinus syndrome. We were able to place pacemakers in postmortem hearts. Beyond SCVMA, we host Case of the Month lectures, presented by our interns and residents, and alternating in small and large animals. This is great practice to get ready for Grand Rounds, and allows the students to learn about some of the most interesting cases coming through the hospital in an informal manner. In addition, internal medicine shadowing, allows 1st to 3rd year students to follow a 4th year student and their intern or resident as they work through their morning or afternoon cases. This an exciting opportunity for students to get into the clinic, and see the entire process- from interviewing the client, to performing diagnostics, to coming up with a treatment plan. Since the ACVIM has chapters at other schools, we also participate in online VIN rounds sessions geared towards students interested in pursuing internships and residencies. This allows us to connect with other vet students from across the country and the USA. Overall, the club is growing by leaps and bounds, and we are looking forward to providing more exciting opportunities for our members!
The Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) Class of 2009 began surgical exercises this year as part of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program. In order to showcase the skills we have been learning in surgical exercises, we ran the Teddy Bear Surgery Clinic during College Royal Open House weekend at the University of Guelph from March 15-16, 2008.

Teddy Bear Surgery is designed to be an interactive experience for children and their families. Children are encouraged to bring their sick or injured stuffed animals to be admitted for surgery. A wide variety of procedures were performed on these cherished pets, from bandaging a broken arm to heart transplants and eye transplants. After being gowned and gloved, children worked one-on-one with a student veterinarian to heal their stuffed animal. The principals behind surgery, anesthesia, suturing, and bandaging were explained to each child. Once the stuffed animal had fully recovered, the children each received a certificate to let everyone know that they had completed training to become a "Certified Teddy Bear Surgeon."

Teddy Bear Surgery is an entirely student run event, organized and staffed by the OVC Class of 2009, Jade Jaguars. The goal of this exhibit is to provide an entertaining and engaging experience for children and their families, as well as promote interest in veterinary medicine. We hope that by participating in Teddy Bear Surgery, children will take pride in accomplishing their surgical training, as well as learning the importance of taking care of a sick or injured pet. It also gives students a chance to get away from their textbooks and busy academic schedules!

This year was the first year that we teamed up with the OVC Alumni Association. The OVC AA brought arts and crafts for children while they were waiting their turn to become a Teddy Bear Surgeon. This made the wait for the over 650 children that attended our display a lot more enjoyable!

A special thanks to our sponsors for this event, the Central Veterinary Students Association, Wyeth Animal Health, Hill’s Pet Nutrition, and Banfield.
Each year, a student is elected to represent every college in Canada and to act as a liaison between VwB and students; a student representative also sits on the board of directors. Student involvement is important to VwB, and numerous student-based activities have been fostered as a result. The 2007-2008 school year included the second annual travel scholarship, as well as a brand new Uniterra externship. The travel scholarship requires students to apply with a project proposal that fits VwB’s mandate, and it helps students realize their own project of international cooperation in developing countries. Last year, Scarlett Magda from OVC went to Thailand to study the impact of saddles on elephant welfare. Hélène Massé, Marie Lavoie, and Marie-Hélène Mallette from FMV went to Madagascar to help develop a chicken farm. Students from AVC accompanied John Van Leeuwen to Kenya to work on a dairy cooperative. And those are just a few examples of VwB-supported projects that involved students.

A common point of discussion was the rising popularity of this area of veterinary medicine and the lack of opportunities available in Canadian veterinary schools for students to explore future careers in international medicine. Representatives discussed ways to better integrate international veterinary medicine into their DVM programs and offer unique and valuable international opportunities to students. One of the biggest developments was the announcement of a new veterinary internship program offered through Uniterra, Canada’s biggest international voluntary program. Through VwB’s partnership with Uniterra, veterinary students can apply to work in summer internships in countries such as Vietnam, Burkina Faso, and Bolivia. Uniterra will help to arrange invaluable student work experiences with local capacity-building projects that focus on agriculture, rural development, health, nutrition, and the environment. This is a fantastic opportunity for students to immerse themselves in international veterinary medicine and foster their future careers in this field. Uniterra will generously subsidize the costs of travel, living expenses, and stipends for qualifying students.

Current programs at Canadian veterinary schools such as Defi Vet Monde and Global Vets, were also discussed with the aim of improving these programs and increasing the opportunities that they can provide to students interested in international medicine.

Finally, student representatives discussed the exciting potential of student membership into the International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA). Currently only OVC (through the International Veterinary Medicine Club) has established a student chapter of the IVSA, but representatives were quickly convinced of the fantastic benefits that membership into this organization can provide. Among them are: outgoing student volunteer placements in over 56 countries around the world, helping international veterinary students get unique experiences in Canadian veterinary clinics, as well as increased international collaboration and communication among veterinary students around the world.

It is clear that while there is much more room to grow, exciting events are happening in international veterinary medicine across Canadian veterinary schools. If you want to get involved in any way, or if you have new ideas to propose, please let your representative know! It’s always a pleasure to hear from students!
Team Chile, including Rob Hillerby, Dominique Solecki, and myself, saw the western coast of South America from the arid elevation of the Atacama Desert to glacial Patagonia, at the end of the world. We participated in a number of projects in and around the capital city of Santiago, including two spay-neuter clinics with RIMA (Red Informativa del Movimiento Animal), a small animal organization whose teachings focus on animal welfare, population control, and the importance of responsible pet ownership. We also spent at number of days at the progressive equine clinic Cuartel de Cabalgaduras, treating performance horses, and the Raptor Rehabilitation Centre, where over 30 Chilean condors were being prepared for their re-release into the wild. From the big city, we traveled to the small mountain town of Lonquimay where we participated in an agricultural project aimed at improving milk-goat production and the lives of local farmers. Further south, we learned about animal reproduction at the Universidad Austral in Valdivia and practiced our equine palpation skills at Sira-cusa a horse-breeding farm in Osorno.

Finally in Puenta Arenas and Tierra del Fuego, we assisted with the handling and treatment of 5000 sheep at Estancia Fortuna, one of the many large and historic sheep ranches vital to the local community and economy.

The Chilean landscapes were both unique and breath taking, and yet the mountains and maritime-like coasts bore a striking resemblance to those here in Canada. We found the Chilean people exceptionally warm and welcoming, and we frequently found ourselves being ushered into the homes of strangers for a hot meal and a broken Spanish conversation. Our experiences in Chile were rich and diverse and every minute is captured in our photographs and permanently etched in our memories.
**FMV Global Vet Challenge: Adventures in the Philippines**

TAYA FORDE  
*FMV, DVM Candidate 2010*

It’s rare that one has the opportunity to plan a dream journey in which one can  
1. choose the destination,  
2. travel with two best friends,  
3. work with exotic animals, and  
4. decide exactly what to do and when to do it.

This is the experience that is available to a few lucky vet students each year at the University of Montreal through the project Défi Vet-Monde, or Global Vet Challenge. In the summer of 2007, I was part of one of two teams participating in the 14th installment of this project since its inception in 1994. Our team of three decided that we wanted to discover the Philippines, a country that we originally knew very little about but that eventually won our hearts.

After a great deal of planning, fundraising, and with the support of a number of very important sponsors, we left in early May for a 2 1/2-month adventure! Our travels took us to all the main regions of the Philippines, an archipelago of over 7000 islands located north of Indonesia. During our stay, we worked with a number of vets in their daily practices, which ranged from small animal clinics, to universities, to wildlife conservation groups working with a wide variety of species. Although the overall experience was particularly enriching because of this diversity, one of our most memorable destinations was on the southwestern island of Mindanao. This island is less visited by tourists, (which are already a rare sighting in most parts of the country!), due to the presence of terrorist groups in certain areas of the island. However, we were extremely well taken care of by all of our hosts, and this risk did nothing to detract from the two incredible weeks that we spent with the Philippine Eagle Foundation in Malagos District, Davao City.

The Philippine Eagle Foundation, recently featured in the February 2008 issue of the National Geographic magazine, is a very well-organized center dedicated to the preservation of the Philippine eagle. This endangered species is certainly one of the most expressive birds on the planet, with penetrating blue eyes and an intimidating wingspan of nearly 2 m. Sadly, this eagle is in risk of extinction due primarily to deforestation, and only an estimated 200 breeding pairs remain in the wild. The PEF is working to preserve this magnificent species through a multi-faceted approach: not only do is there an extensive, meticulously organized breeding program, including natural pairings as well as artificial insemination, but great emphasis is placed on educating the local people about how known habitat areas are important to the preservation of this species.

During our stay at the center, we had the chance to meet Manong Eddie and Manong Ben, two ‘surrogate mates’ who have been working at PEF for about 15 years. Their dedication to this project is inspiring. Six days a week, year-round they play the role of ‘life mate’ to two or three birds each. The Philippine eagle mates for life, so once they choose a partner, it’s for good! However, not just any partner will do. Special enclosures have been set up at the center so that a single male and single female are separated from each other by wire fencing. These ‘mating pens’ are closely observed for months to see whether or not the birds will accept each other as partners. During the breeding season, the male presents the female with pieces of food through the screen, uttering specific ‘sex vocals’ to show that he is interested. If the female reciprocates these advances, then they will be placed together to form a pair. If not, the center has no choice but to try again. If placed together, the female could easily kill the male if she decides that he’s not the one! In some cases, the bird (male or female) chooses one of the center’s workers as their partner. Ben and Eddie feed their partners...
Adventures in the Philippines [continued from page 13]

Each day, and during breeding season, they play all the parts that the partner would normally fulfill. This is the most complicated version of artificial insemination that we have ever heard of! The first bird raised from artificial insemination, Pag-asa (meaning ‘hope’) has now fathered several of his own offspring. The center released its first bird raised entirely in captivity in 2006.

Although we weren’t able to work directly with the Philippine eagle (it was breeding season, and human contact is limited to the birds’ regular feeders or partners), we had the extraordinary luck to participate in the annual examinations of the other 60 birds (about 8 different raptor species) that are kept at the center. This process took place over 3 days, extending well into the evenings when it was easier to catch some of the birds kept in larger cages. We thus found ourselves outside in the dark with a small examination kit and headlamps, verifying for parasites, taking blood samples, and injecting dewormers. For 3 students who had just barely begun clinical examinations, let alone taking blood from a bird as small as a Scops Owl, this was a wonderfully rewarding experience.

We left the Philippine Eagle Foundation, along with the incredible family who hosted us during our stay, having learned a great deal about conservation, dedication, and patience. It goes to show that the hard work of just a few dedicated individuals really can make a difference.

Surely without the initiatives taken by the founders of the PEF, the fate of this striking eagle would be all the more precarious. Now an emblem of the country, there is hope that this proud predator will remain a symbol for the Filipino people for years to come.

We thank the Philippine Eagle Foundation for graciously hosting us and allowing us to participate in their important activities, the Oxales family for their hospitality, as well as our sponsors, without whom this undertaking would not have been possible.

OVC Global Vets: A Summer in Southeast Asia

MICHAEL MOSSOP
OVC Class of 2009

[Editor’s Note: This article was originally published in OVMA’s Focus magazine, Jan/Feb 2008, pg 38-41]

World travel provides the type of education that you can’t find in any classroom. While textbooks and formal instruction are indispensable scholastic tools, some lessons are best learned in the laboratory of human experience. I have been very fortunate in this regard; ever since I caught the travel bug while studying in Kenya in 2002, I have seized every opportunity I could to strike out on a new adventure.

Most recently, I combined my passions for travel and veterinary medicine by participating in the Global Vets program. This program is offered to students at the Ontario Veterinary College the summer after their second year and provides a unique opportunity for student veterinarians to investigate animal health care in developing nations. For students who participated this year, much of our time during the course of the school year was occupied making contacts, organizing projects, or pursuing corporate sponsorship and other fundraising opportunities. The workload was daunting, especially in light of academic and other commitments, but having returned home after the adventure of a lifetime, it goes without saying that it was all worth it.

This year, there were 13 students who set out under the auspices of Global Vets; 3 to Chile, 7 to east Africa, and myself and 2 classmates, Jessica and Laetitia, to southeast Asia where we volunteered in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Arriving in Vietnam we settled into a small guesthouse in the heart of Hanoi’s historic Old Quarter, where the streets are lined with a multitude of shops and cafés selling everything from beef noodle soup to freshly brewed beer, all to patrons sitting on small plastic sidewalk furniture. The atmosphere there is alive with energy; the smell from herbal medicine shops mingles with exhaust fumes; fruit sellers stroll by carrying lychees or jackfruit in baskets suspended from a shoulder yoke. The streets themselves are narrow and filled with a seething mass of motorbikes, scooters, and ambling cyclos (3-wheeled bicycle taxis). For the most part, the rules of the road have been replaced by excessive horn use and trying to get from one sidewalk to another is intimidating at first.

Our first act of official business took us to the outskirts of town where we met our contact, the Director of the Department of Water Buffalo Research at the National Institute of Animal Hus-

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bandry. He introduced us to two graduate students of his, who would serve as guide and interpreter as we travelled outside of the city. Our time in rural Vietnam was spent visiting research stations and small-holder farms in both the Bavi district and Ha Giang Province, about 60 km and 300 km north of Hanoi, respectively. We chose to work with water buffalo here because their cultural significance is particularly strong in the northern regions of the country. Often the most valuable asset a farmer owns, a buffalo can be used for its meat and milk as well as the labor it performs. Their success as a domesticated species in Southeast Asia is due to their ability to thrive on poor foodstuffs and yet be valuable economically. Water buffalo are much better suited to plowing the muddy rice paddies than cattle, and while rice production in many parts of the country has become mechanized, people in the northern mountain regions still rely almost exclusively on the buffalo due to the difficult terrain and their lack of disposable income.

The only westerners we would see for days on end would be each other, as we travelled through some very remote areas not far from the Chinese border. We attracted a good deal of attention from the locals, but I always felt that we were treated more like travelers than like tourists. Our guides proved to be indispensable, as did the 4-wheel-drive vehicle we hired, complete with driver. The narrow mountain roads were harrowing and I now know what a hamster must feel like after being put in one of those little plastic balls and kicked down an escalator. When not asleep or trying to stop our brains from rattling within our skulls, we were able to enjoy picturesque scenes of buffalo and farmer working together on rice paddies surrounded by lush green rolling hills and towering limestone pillars.

The areas we visited required us to have a special government permit which had thankfully been arranged in advance. Even so, our day often started with a visit to the office of the local government which was invariably adorned in socialist red, with images of Ho Chi Minh, or even Lenin and Marx, hanging on the walls. The local farmers were all extremely generous in inviting us into their homes, the majority of which were stilted structures built of timber and bamboo. Upon each visit we received the usual bottomless cup of tea, and on a few occasions a farmer would even offer us homemade rice wine. Potency and flavor varied from place to place, but the volume was always abundant. Sitting cross-legged on the bamboo floor in a circle with the farmer, his family, his friends, a couple local officials, and our guides, it seemed everybody wanted to toast the newcomers. Not wanting to disappoint any of the eager locals, we were always happy to oblige.

The purpose of these farm visits was to interview the farmers and learn about their daily lives, the economics of Vietnamese
agriculture and some of the common animal health issues they encounter. The most common condition they cited were various *Pasteurella* infections, although the language barrier made me suspect they used the term to refer to a number of bacterial infections that may or may not have actually been *Pasteurella*. We also discussed surveillance programs which are in place to control contagious diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and avian influenza. We discovered that these involve compensation being paid to affected farmers, and that the front lines are monitored by veterinarians of the local government who undergo a less-than-rigorous 6 month training program. We had the opportunity to speak with one of these local vets who told us that she did little in the way of diagnostics, but was able to administer regular vaccines and basic treatments. If any public health-related concerns arose, however, she would make a call to a veterinarian at the next level of government.

On this particular leg of our trip we had ample opportunity to expand our gastronomic boundaries as we ate many novel foods, including buffalo meat, chicken feet, frogs, snakes, and yes, even dog. Canine cuisine is a very important part of the culture in Vietnam, and is practiced widely, although it is inauspicious to do so during the first 5 days of the lunar month. While some of my classmates may well lynch me for participating, I actually felt it was my moral duty to at least try it given the cultural setting. I wouldn’t want to be categorized as a speciesist, after all.

Due to government regulations, we were restricted to our interviews, farm tours, and a few physical examinations. This left us wanting a little more from a veterinary perspective, so we were keen to move on to our 3 remaining projects which we hoped would allow us to get our hands a little dirtier.

The island of Koh Samui, Thailand, is a stark contrast to the highlands of North Vietnam. Crass and commercial are the flavors of the day. Shops selling knock-off clothing and cheap watches line the main streets interspersed by posh resorts we couldn’t afford to dine in, never mind spend the night at. Despite all this, the work we did at the Dog Rescue Center Samui (DRCS) made this visit truly worthwhile.

Controlled chaos, and I use the term “controlled” loosely, is the best way to describe my first impression of the DRCS. The center, which also rescues cats, actually has two facilities on the island. The smaller of the two doubles as the house of the owner/founder, a German expatriate, and the larger of the two operates as a dedicated shelter complete with surgical suite. A mob of 50-odd enthusiastically barking dogs greeted us on our first day of volunteering as we approached the front gate of the smaller of the two facilities. The sweet smell of urine and feces wafted through the air as we opened the gate ever so slightly and slipped in. Fending off dirty paws left, right, and center, we made our way to the front door of the house and entered to make our introductions.

The mission of the DRCS is to control the island’s feral animal population through surgical sterilization, and to provide free treatment to any animal in need, be they somebody’s pet or otherwise. There are a total of about 300 dogs at the center, and while most of them are in relatively good shape save some ticks and maybe a little mange, there are others which are in pretty dire straights. The condition of these dogs is not something that a Canadian would be used to seeing, at least not outside of the intensive care unit of a veterinary hospital. Gaping wounds crawling with maggots, encrusted faces, or paralyzed hind ends which have been dragged until the skin is raw are not uncommon. All of these animals are under the charge of a single Thai veterinarian as well as 8-10 staff who are all very nice, but probably not the hardest workers money can buy. As student veterinarians, we were put straight to work. Our duties included doing physical examinations on all of the resident dogs, administering vaccines and dewormers, cleaning wounds, trimming long neglected nails, and much more.

For the most part work went well, but we faced a few limitations along the way. The language barrier once again became a hindrance; many of the drugs used at the center had labels written

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(L to R) Laetitia, Jessica, and Mike relax on the way home from a hard day’s work at the DRCS. Koh Samui, Thailand.
In Thai or German and there was also a fair bit that would get lost in translation when talking to the doctor. His English was passable (our Thai was more or less nonexistent, so we couldn’t complain), but we often had to settle for only partial answers to our questions. He is a man in great demand at the center. Among us, the other volunteers, and his regular duties, he was being pulled in several different directions at once, so we tried to bother him as little as possible unless we were working directly with him at the time. Even with his help, the lack of diagnostics may have limited the effectiveness of some of the treatments we administered. There is essentially no diagnostic testing done at the center: no blood tests, no bacterial cultures, no viral antigen tests, etc. so our 5 senses were the only tools we had. Another obstacle was the general lack of organization at the center. In all fairness, the staff works with very limited materials and human resources. There are so many animals at the center, with more arriving every day, that some inevitably fall through the cracks. There are plenty of dogs without records and records without dogs, an obvious source of frustration when you are trying to track down every single one for treatment.

There was ample opportunity for us to practice our clinical skills at the DRCS, and we all experienced a few firsts of our young veterinary careers, namely our first surgeries and euthanasias. I was able to personally spay two dogs and neuter another, and although surgical technique is not nearly as rigorous as it is at the OVC, I am happy to report that all of my patients were still alive and kicking when I left Samui. The learning curve was steep, and maybe a little shaky at times, but in the end our first surgical experiences were very satisfying. The doctor showed great faith in us (perhaps too much), often leaving us to our own devices. When asking him if we should use a given technique he would always reply, "You choose technique," not making the crucial connection that at this point in our careers we simply didn’t have a technique! Regardless, we managed to muddle through as did our patients. Euthanasia was a touchy subject at the center and seemed to be a cause of tension between different factions of the staff. The Thai staff, including the veterinarian, are Buddhists and the concept of euthanasia is not something that is easily reconciled with their faith. Much to the dismay of the owner, this means that animals with no chance of recovery are sometimes left to suffer longer than necessary, and hence we were asked to intervene in a few instances. It’s a delicate balance, as you want to do what is right for the animals, which in these cases are obviously suffering, but you have to be careful not to step on the toes of any of the staff at the same time. Needless to say, it was emotional putting down some of the animals we’d been treating in the days prior. It was, however, for the best and provided good experience in an area that we will unfortunately have to deal with throughout our careers.

The placement we had arranged at the hospital of the National Elephant Institute (NEI) in Northern Thailand was possibly the portion of the trip that I was most looking forward to from the beginning. Asian elephants are highly revered in Thai culture, and are inextricably intertwined with the history of the country. They are listed as an endangered species and their numbers in Thailand have plummeted over the last 50–100 years. Wild populations have dwindled due to habitat fragmentation, poaching, and other ills brought on by encroaching civilization. Domestic populations have suffered a similar fate. At the turn of the 20th century there were approximately 100,000 domestic elephants working in Thailand, virtually all of them in the logging industry. Currently, there are only about 2500 and logging has more or less been banned in Thailand, with the exception of restricted tracts that are planted sustainably. A few still do hold legal jobs, but many work illegally, meaning they work long, hard hours overnight, often pushed on by amphetamine injections administered by unscrupulous owners. These illegals also tend to work in dangerous areas, such as the deep jungle that borders Laos or Myanmar where uncharted mine fields still abound (several of the elephants at the NEI are there as a result of land mine injuries). The remainder of the working population has now gone into tourism or street begging, two industries that present their own set of challenges. The bottom line is, conservation is needed now more than ever, and I could not think of a better way to learn more and get involved than to help out at the NEI.

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The center itself is located just outside of the city of Lampang, an hour and a half drive south of Chiang Mai. It is funded in part by the government, but must supply about 50% of its budget through donation and ticket sales, etc. It is a sprawling complex with a tourist-oriented area near the front featuring elephant rides, educational displays, and a show where you can watch an elephant paint a picture much better than anything I myself could produce. Other major components of the center include the Royal Elephant Stables, the hospital and the Mahout school... but what is a mahout anyway? A mahout — originally an Indian term — is a person who drives, cares for, and trains an elephant. Historically they worked in pairs, generally father-son teams, so that there would be somebody the elephant is familiar with to continue training if the original mahout passed away. At the NEI mahout school they train and teach Thais, as well as tourists who can sign up for a course lasting anywhere from 3 days to 3 months.

The level of organization in the elephant hospital was a welcome relief after the disarray at the DRCS on Samui. There were thorough records, a stocked pharmacy, and access to equipment such as ultrasound machines and endoscopes. The hospital provides all services free of charge to any elephant that needs them. Some cases are brought directly to the hospital, but since moving an elephant is not the simplest of tasks, many cases are dealt with through the mobile elephant clinic service. There are 5 veterinarians who work at the NEI, all of whom we addressed by their nicknames since their real names were simply too long and unwieldy, even for other Thais. Two of the five doctors were in fact younger than I and they were given the job of taking us under their wings. They did an admirable job of teaching us as well as entertaining us, but the jokes, oh the jokes! They were actually so bad that they almost became funny again (almost).

There were two rules we were given in regards to our interactions with the elephants in the hospital: 1) elephants are not pets, and 2) never approach an elephant unless their mahout is present. With an average weight of over 3000 kg it is easy to see how a little common sense could go a long way. For the most part, there were no problems whatsoever, but I did have one scary incident. One day in the hospital I was walking near a few of the elephants who were restrained and quietly munching on some banna grass (their principle feed). A mahout was nearby and all was right with the world as I snapped a few photos at my leisure. Turning away momentarily, I managed to catch a flash out of the corner of my eye, just as I felt the impact of what seemed like an oversized log being swung into my shoulder. Next thing I knew I was on the ground a few meters away, looking up at an elephant still munching happily on her late morning grass. It took me a moment, but I soon realized that she had taken exception to how close I had been standing and had swung her head in my direction, using her trunk to knock me to the ground (quite effectively, I might add). My shoulder was sore for a couple days, but I feel very fortunate as the incident could have been much more serious. If my respect for these animals had not been healthy enough in the first place, it certainly was after this run-in.

That incident aside, we had no problems interacting with the elephants and were more or less allowed to participate in all aspects of their care, from basic management to medical treatment. Our first day at the center we were each assigned an elephant to work with for the remainder of our stay. This way the elephants had a chance to get accustomed to us and we had a chance to become familiar with what was involved in their daily care. My elephant was named Loi Gau, which translates directly into 109. I never was able to find out why she had a number for a name, unlike any of the other elephants, but she was mine either way. Loi Gau was about 40 years old and was in the hospital due to emaciation and a wound on one of her hind legs. Every morning at 7 am I would meet Udon, Loi Gau’s mahout. We would head over to where Loi Gau was tethered overnight and start the day off with a good session of dung shovelling. After that, we would walk her down a couple hundred meters
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towards the hospital where I’d give her a bath with the hose, always managing to get myself thoroughly soaked in the process, and filling up her trunk once or twice if she happened to be thirsty that particular morning. Morning treatment followed, consisting of vitamin pills hidden inside a gob of sticky tamarind, a good cleaning of her wounded foot and finally, a breakfast of banana grass.

The remainder of our days varied quite a bit. Some of the cases in the hospital included an elephant with a mysterious lameness in one of its hind legs (still undiagnosed after 2 weeks, radiographs, ultrasound examinations and a visit from an equine lameness specialist), an eye infection, colic and a case of vulvar hyperplasia. Conservation being the principle goal of the center, reproduction was another major focus of our time at the NEI. In fact, only 4 months previous to our arrival they became the first center in Asia to birth a calf conceived through artificial insemination. Still waiting to be officially named by the King of Thailand, the calf, whom we had the pleasure of bottle feeding on occasion, was simply nicknamed “A.I.” We were also lucky enough to be on hand for a semen collection workshop that was hosted for students from Chiang Mai University, and took part in semen collection and preparation, as well as the insemination of a female a few days later. The experience was pretty unique and maybe in two years time (gestation ~ 22 months) there could be a little baby elephant born that I played some minute part in bringing into this world.

Our trips outside of the hospital with the mobile elephant clinic proved equally interesting and one of my favorite outings took place in the middle of nowhere. After driving down the highway for several hours we pulled off onto a dirt track leading into a dense forest of towering teak trees. Deep into the forest we stopped, got out of our truck, and waited. Sure enough, a few minutes later an elephant emerged from the trees with his mahout and they made their way up a hill towards us. We treated two elephants that day, both of whom work in the logging industry; one for a shoulder abscess the size of a small watermelon (likely caused by the logging harness) and the other for an eye problem. Without a sound to be heard except the breeze rustling through the teak leaves, the setting was truly enchanting. Another great experience was working at the Pang La rehabilitation center which is associated with the NEI, but nestled deep in the forest a few hours away. It is home to elephants that aren’t wanted, or can’t be handled; this includes the old and frail, those deformed due to injury, or the “furious” (a term used to describe elephants that are mentally unbalanced and/or aggressive). With a great deal of help from the mahouts and what I can best describe as a massive wooden elephant restraint gate, we examined the resident elephants, estimated body condition scores, gave regular injections, and cleaned wounds.

Our final project saw us hop on a plane to Indonesia, where I really was not sure what to expect. The drive from the Jakarta International Airport to the neighbouring city of Bogor was a little like wading through soup, hot, humid, and smoggy enough to completely cloak the skyline in a dense fog. After a couple hours in gridlocked traffic, we arrived in Bogor, Western Java, at the offices of the Center for Indonesian Veterinary Analytical Studies (CIVAS). The office consisted of a converted house in suburban Bogor and would serve as our home for the next two weeks. The people at CIVAS, which is the only veterinary NGO based in Indonesia, were very hospitable and made us feel right at home, save the fact we had to shower using a bucket and that we were encouraged to eat everything (including rice) with our hands, as

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CIVAS is dedicated to improving the health and welfare of human beings through the improvement of animal health, animal welfare, and food safety of animal origin. The organization has strong leadership and is made up primarily from a group of relatively young Indonesian veterinarians. The focus of our work in Indonesia was avian influenza and how the global health concern was being handled in the most case-dense area of the planet.

During our stay we visited many farms in the nearby Sukabumi region, some of which were large, commercial, and industrialized, and others that were nothing but a few chickens in someone’s backyard. We helped collect blood samples that would be used to analyze titer levels for an ongoing vaccination trial, and spoke with representatives from the KEPRAK organization which is focused on making village farming systems sustainable in the face of economic and disease related challenges. While we were in western Java we also had the opportunity to visit a busy small animal clinic in Jakarta and the campus of the Bogor Agricultural University where we attended a symposium dedicated to working towards stronger veterinary legislation in Indonesia.

At one point, my travel mate Jessica got quite sick (Escherichia coli poisoning) and was hospitalized for a few days. A few liters of IV fluids and some antibiotics later she was feeling much better, but unfortunately was not well enough to make our 3-day trip to the Kediri Regency in eastern Java. Leaving her in good hands, Laetitia and I kept on trucking and spent a memorable few days with a group of students from Airlangga University who were in the midst of a field course. Accommodation was pretty rustic and I ended up spending my nights on the floor of the common room along with 25 other male students. This wouldn’t have been so bad, but we had the misfortune of being located in close proximity to one of the loudspeakers that would punctually blare Islamic prayer music beginning at 4:30 am. Without a doubt, not the best sleep I have had in my life. A trip to the bathroom was also interesting, and required that we cross a small dirt yard strewn with banana trees and clothes lines before passing through the neighbours’ smoke filled kitchen. During our visit to Kediri we had the opportunity to vaccinate some chickens against Avian Influenza and to do “keswan” (house calls) in the local village. This consisted of visiting small farms, doing brief examinations on cattle and goats, and administering minor treatments.

After completing our stint in Indonesia, I whiled away my last few days in Asia on Bangkok’s Khao San Road, a mecca for Backpackers in the region. I had just enough time there to visit the Grand Palace, do some shopping, and start writing this article before having to wake up at 4am to catch my flight home. But that time is up now, and regretfully I must leave you here. The last three months have gone by in a flash, but have left me with memories that will last a lifetime and a rich cultural education that will stay with me even as I return to a more traditional classroom this fall.

I would like to thank all of our contacts and sponsors, without whom this trip would not have been possible. In addition, I would like to thank the Global Vets faculty advisors for their guidance, and my travel mates Jessica and Laetitia for putting up with me for 8 weeks straight.

For more information on our sponsors or the organizations we were involved with please visit the following Web sites:

http://www.ovc.uoguelph.ca/associations/globalvets/2007
http://www.samuidog.org/

OVC Global Vets: A Trip to Katavi

Becky Craig
OVC Class of 2009

It had been 9 hours of bumpy roads in the dilapidated old Land Rover. I was crammed in the back with 8 strangers, and my right buttock was numb from the metal bar I’d been straddling for the ride. My friends were sitting in the middle section. Jenn was beside the overly zealous African cowboy who showed great fondness for her; Julia sat with a baby on her lap that had been crying since lunch. We’d been traveling in eastern Africa for over a month now, and this was unequivocally the most painful and testing trip yet. The 12-hour shock-less bus ride yesterday was likely exasperating the situation, and our enthusiasm for reaching the national park we were headed to was waning, unfortunately, things were about to get worse.

We left Canada May 1st for Nairobi. We had organized a variety of opportunities for experiential learning with veterinary related projects in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The project we were currently

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headed to was in Tanzania’s Katavi National Park, a more isolated and unfamiliar park than its famed neighbor, The Serengeti.

Katavi is the third largest national park in Tanzania, and the most remote. It is renowned for its wetlands, full of hippopotami, buffalo, and crocodiles. The literature describes Katavi as “a true wilderness, providing the few intrepid souls who make it there with a thrilling taste of Africa, as it must have been a century ago.” I can attest to its quietness, as we only saw two other tourists the entire time.

The veterinarian at Katavi enthusiastically agreed to help us do a small research project within the park. He suggested we gather information on the normal fecal burdens of the park animals from various locations within the park; this information could then be used comparatively when assessing sick animals. There is not sufficient funding for ongoing veterinary research, and Dr. Mlengeya was eager to have students working in the park.

I’d love to elaborate and tell you about the many stops we’d had that day to fix things on the truck, but I’ll summarize by saying that when the motor started billowing large puffs of smoke (just as the sun was setting), no one was much surprised. Unfortunately, this latest car letdown was severe enough to strand us in the middle of the forest, just 30 km from the official park entrance. Thirty kilometers doesn’t sound like much, but with no phones and no one likely to drive by until morning, things were feeling a little hopeless. Our African car companions were whispering about ‘simba, simba’ (Swahili for lion) as we were cautiously sneaking away to relieve ourselves in the bushes. The last few days had left us with short tempers and weary minds, and perhaps, even questioning why we’d decided to come to this remote location. I crawled onto the roof of the vehicle for a better view, and to escape the arguing that was going on below. As I looked around me, and began to take notice of the sky, now turning a fiery red, and to hear the noises of the birds settling in for the night, it didn’t take me long to relax, and remember that we had come to Katavi because it was a remote, isolated, and mysterious place, and that I was exactly where I’d wanted to be; in a new place, surrounded by beautiful and exotic things.

We did make it to camp that night and fell asleep to the sounds of hippos bathing in the river next to us. Within a few days we had begun our project. Each day we went by safari to a new quadrant of the park in search of herds from which we could collect fresh heaps of parasite-infested feces. Gathering our samples from the giraffes and gazelles and other docile animals was wonderful. We’d get out, walk around, stretch our legs, and gather the dung. However, when it came to samplings from the buffalo or elephants, our process required alteration. The buffalo were not easily scared off, and in order for us to gather fresh feces, we often found ourselves head on with the stoic horned creatures.

Our gathering technique was quickly solidified. The unlucky vet student would slip out of the side door, scoop the poop, and jump back in. The rest of us would be on watch for charging angered beasts. We spent quite a bit of time in the “vet-mobile” gathering data from around the park. Back at camp we did the analyses and eventually, a write-up. We also spent some time learning about the role of the veterinarian, as well as the other management positions within the park.

Dr. Mlengeya is in the process of establishing a veterinary research facility at the park. He is excited about the prospect of students visiting and learning there. If you are interested in going, please contact the International Veterinary Medicine Club at the OVC for information.

I’m sitting at my desk tonight, on the brink of exams, thinking back to the days in the truck spent exploring the expansive parkland; eating oranges under the Baobab trees, and eagerly anticipating spotting another lion. I don’t remember all the parasite eggs we identified, or even which species had the largest burden, but I can still hear the sounds of the hippos when I close my eyes, and I’ll always remember the fiery red sky that first night. I hope that others will take advantage of the opportunities Katavi offers for research or learning, and, best of all, the opportunity to get lost in time for a few days in the great wildness of Katavi.
One year ago today I could have been sitting on the hot sandy beach in Samara, which is in the Guanacaste province of Costa Rica... Or maybe I could have been deworming a pack of rehabilitated orphaned howler monkeys that had been raised in captivity but were now ready to be released into the wild... Come to think of it I could have been patrolling a beach to protect sea turtle nests from poachers... Or perhaps I was using a sledgehammer to try to break a giant slab of concrete into smaller pieces for reasons I did not understand!

Last summer a group of 5 second-year students from WCVM traveled to Costa Rica with the single-minded goal of doing our part to help animals in need — well maybe we wanted to work on our tans a little bit too. As you may have guessed already, our volunteer activities were varied to say the least, and no 2 days were quite the same. As the song goes — some days were better than others and some days were twice as long, but overall, I am confident that none of us would trade the experience for anything!

Our trip started off with a week in Samara where we took Spanish classes in the mornings and played on the beach all afternoon. We started off this way because we were unable to find projects that would allow us to volunteer with them if we weren’t able to speak Spanish. Although we did attend class for 4 hours daily and did all of our homework... well most of it at least, and stayed with local families who didn’t speak a word of English, it wasn’t possible to learn Spanish in a week. Who knew?

Next we headed off to San José, the capital city of Costa Rica in search of the volunteer coordination office through which we had booked our first project: a wild animal shelter. We had some difficulty locating the building, it turns out no buildings have addresses in Costa Rica and the directions we had been given were something like: go 2 blocks past the church and turn right. We also lost a few possessions in the process, future travelers beware, San José is a really great place to get robbed. But we eventually found the office, and hung around long enough for it to open, got some sketchy directions to our first volunteer project, and headed on our way.

This may be a good place to say a few words about bus travel in Costa Rica. Much like store or office hours, buses do not stick to any strict schedule and commonly leave stations and stops both early and late. They also do not have toilets on board and do not stop at any regular interval for washroom breaks, much to my dismay. It is also common for ex drug addicts (or at least this was our impression of the situation with the little Spanish we understood) to get onto busses and shout their sad life stories at the passengers then ask for donations or try to sell snacks. The first time that this happened, we thought the bus was getting high-jacked!

At the animal shelter we cared for the wild animals that were being rehabilitated from injuries or that were permanently in the park if they were not suited to release. We also did landscaping tasks, and dewormed and provided emergency care for a great variety of species. Never once in the time we were there did we finish a task we started. We started painting fences, raking piles of rocks, and cleaning up cages, but invariably, we were interrupted before finishing and sent to do something else! The presence of armed guards and apparent lack of financial feasibility of the project lead to some speculation that it was in fact a complex front for a drug smuggling operation, but that is another story entirely!

Our next project was our overall favorite. Following yet another bus trip, this time followed by a 4 x 4 taxi ride where we were relieved to actually find seat belts, we boarded a boat reminiscent of a beat up version of Disney’s jungle cruise and headed off into the jungle. At this project we patrolled the remote beaches of the area at night in search of sea turtles nesting. We then collected the eggs and placed them in artificial nests, which were built in guarded hatcheries to protect them from poachers. Poachers sell the eggs as well as the adult turtle meat in nearby cities as it is believed that turtle products are aphrodisiacs. The project also dedicated resources to rehabilitating local poachers and providing them with education and employment within the project.
The final project we worked on was an effort to spay and neuter stray dogs and cats in villages throughout the country. Things weren’t done the way we were used to seeing them done to say the least, but we had the opportunity to assist vets who had performed enormous numbers of castrations over their careers and believed they were making a big difference in the huge problem of pet overpopulation in Costa Rica.

In summary some of the lessons we learned in our travels included:

1. No matter who tells you that you should dress conservatively in order to fit in in Costa Rica this is a lie! Skin tight is in, no matter what size you are! This also applies to buying clothing, aim for a few sizes larger than you would normally wear or upon your return home you will get strange looks when you sport your new clothing...or lack there of... in public! (Also if you are as pasty white as I am there is no way you are going to fit in anyway so just give up!)

2. Never let any of your possessions out of your sight in Costa Rica or they will be gone! Once you have been robbed and you are sent to the “oh-ee-hota” the building you are looking for will say OIG on the outside. Who knew that the alphabet was pronounced so differently!?

3. Never get on a bus in Costa Rica without first emptying your bladder and never look out the front window, what you see will terrify you. Buses don’t seem to crash very often as they pass each other going 100 around a blind corner with a cliff at the edge of the narrow road so it seems best not to watch!

4. Even if the only beach close by has bull sharks close to shore and a violent rip tide, sometimes it will be so hot that you will just have to go swimming anyway. Also I would advise against body surfing in a bikini in close proximity to your ex-boyfriend. In my experience karma will invariably send you straight for him, disrobed and confused!

5. When spaying and neutering dogs, cats, and the odd domestic pig, what we are told in school about aseptic technique does not apply in Costa Rica! Household items such as zip ties and dish gloves are very useful items when performing surgery, and a parking lot or church is an ideal location for surgeries to take place. If all of this makes you hungry, don’t worry, someone will show up with lunch which you will eat on the same table that someone is in the middle of operating on an animal on. What can you say? Pura vida!

Canadian Veterinary Reserve: Canadian veterinarians stepping up to the challenge—today and tomorrow!

Any of you who attended the SCVMA Symposium at OVC in January 2008 will be quite familiar with the topic of the CVR. At the Symposium, Dr. Brian Evans (Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Chief Veterinary Officer for Canada) kicked off the CVR presentation. He highlighted not only the drivers that have led to the creation of the CVR but also the opportunities it presents for Canadian veterinarians, present and future.

Dr. Evans was followed by Dr. John Drake (CVMA President) who spoke about the role of the CVMA in the CVR and the progress made to date. Dr. Carin Wittnich then shared her real-life experiences in responding to the needs of animals in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The session ended with Dr. Alan Meek providing an update on how things were progressing toward potential student involvement in the CVR.

How might students become involved in the CVR? Following the SCVMA 2008 Symposium the CVR committed to hiring up to 3 veterinary students (summer 2008) to conduct research into how vet students have been engaged in emergency response for animals elsewhere in the world and how they might be engaged in the future of the CVR. The call for “Summer Research Assistantship” applications went out in February 2008 and closed March 3, 2008 with 13 applications having been received. The selected candidates will provide valuable research and recommendations on how to involve veterinary students in the work of the CVR and how students might be prepared to be “reserve-ready” upon graduation.

Don’t forget... Staying engaged in the discussion on CVR development through the SCVMA Representative for your college is a great way to have input into how students may be connected to the work of the CVR.
2008 SCVMA Symposium – CVR Presentation Synopsis

What is the CVR?
The CVR is a growing, national body of qualified Canadian veterinarians (soon to include veterinary technicians and technologists, and potentially veterinary students) who are available to rapidly assist governments in responding to the following types of emergencies:
(1) animal disease outbreaks, and
(2) natural or manmade disasters affecting the health and well-being of large numbers of animals.

What were the drivers for the establishment of the CVR?
A dynamic and evolving risk environment with health, eco-system, and economic consequences (animal disease; natural disasters; man-made disasters; global impacts).

What is the current status of the CVR?
To date, over 370 applications have been received from veterinarians across Canada and 133 of these applicants have been trained in CFIA disease response protocols and practices. Development of training for response to civil emergencies (natural and man-made disasters) is being developed in 2008 and CFIA animal disease related training will continue.

What is the CVMA’s role in the CVR?
Since establishing the CVR with the financial support of the CFIA, the CVMA continues to develop and manage the CVR with the support, advice, and input of Canadian animal health stakeholders.

What are some future opportunities that the CVR may provide (from Dr. Evans’ presentation)?
More than surge capacity; catalyst for new approaches/culture; diverse career path and career change opportunities; incorporating into education; role of undergrads in disaster medicine; new pathways for conducting research; enhanced societal recognition of the veterinary profession; international opportunities.

For the complete presentation made to students at the 2008 SCVMA Symposium please visit the CVMA Web site at http://canadianveterinarians.net/veterinary-reserve.aspx and click on “CVR – SCVMA Symposium 2008” (please note that Dr. Carin Wittnich’s part of the presentation is not available at this link).

Note from the Editor
Thanks to all contributors for your submissions! I hope that your stories inspire other vet students to take advantage of the opportunities available to them while in college. A big thanks to Jess Fung and Jill Harrison (WCVM) for their help with this newsletter—only they know how computer illiterate I am! Another thank you goes out to Janice Lemieux at the CVMA office for all her assistance!

Senior students—enjoy your last year and best of luck to you in your future endeavors.
Freshman students—welcome to vet school!

Tamara Quaschnick, WCVM 2009